A Fawcett Publication

Monte Hale WESTERN

JULY
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NO. 38

BIG 52 PAGES

STALKING ADVENTURE! OVER CANYON, CLIFF AND CHASM WITH THE ROVING COWBOY

WHOLESOME READING ENTERTAINMENT APPROVED

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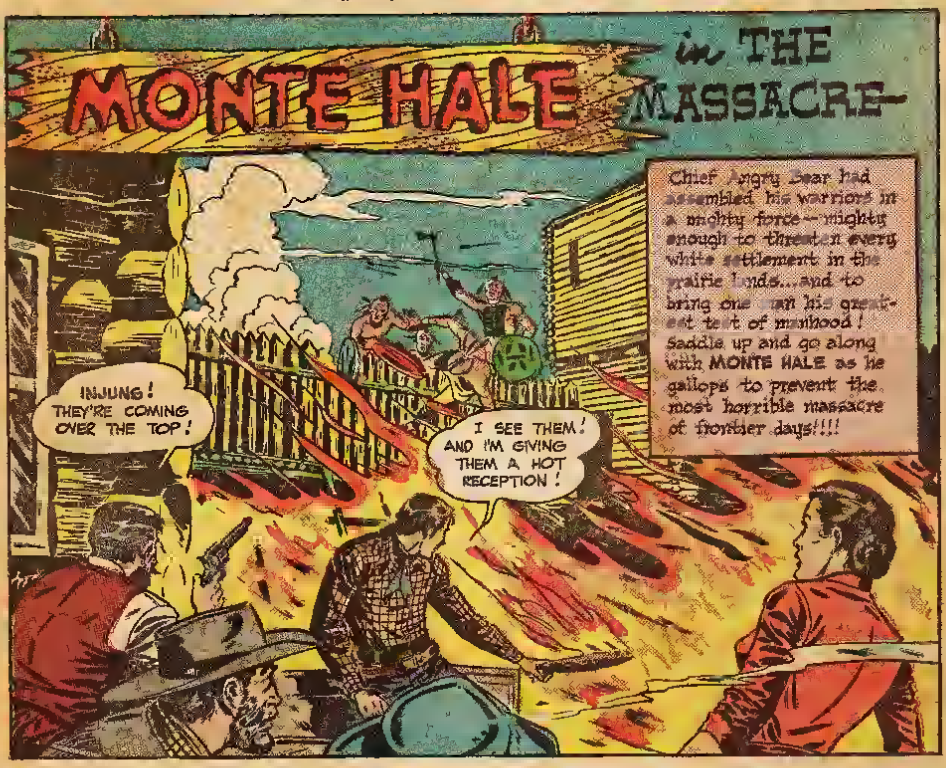

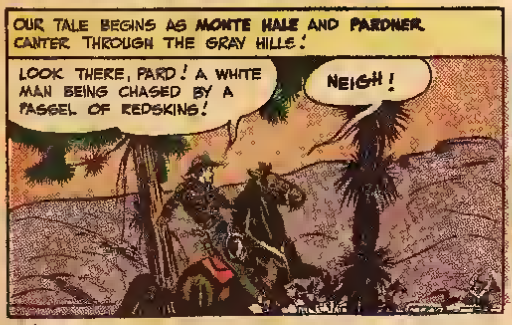

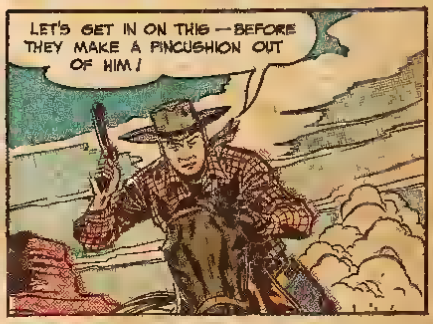

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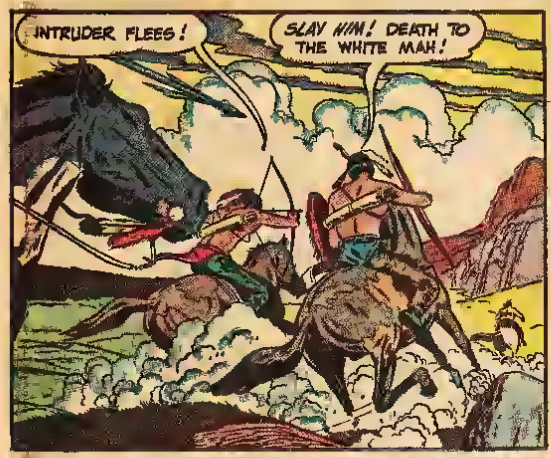
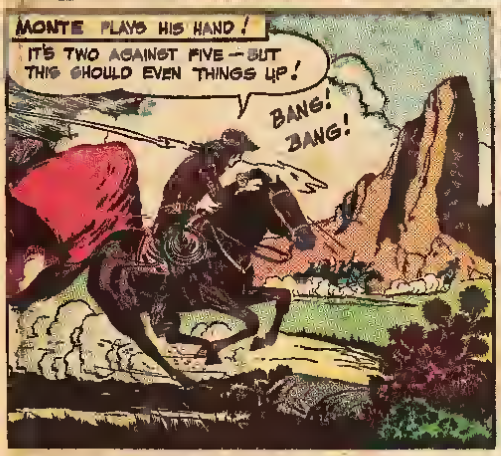

INTRUDER FLEES!
SLAY HIM! DEATH TO THE WHITE MAN!

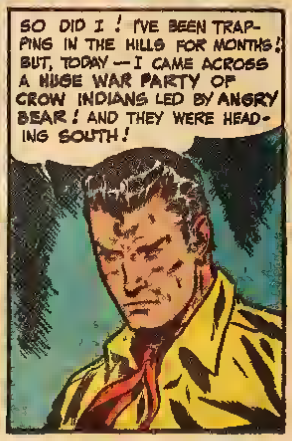

FASTER BOY! WE'VE GOT—TO—GET AWAY!


MONTE PLAYS HIS HAND!
IT'S TWO AGAINST FIVE—BUT THIS SHOULD EVEN THINGS UP!
BANG! BANG!

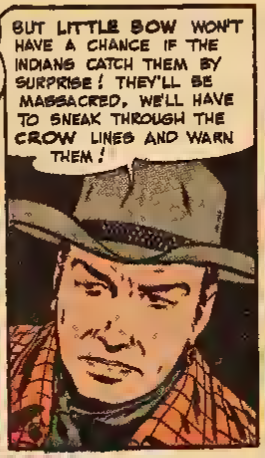

AIEEEE!
MY ARM! AHHH... IT IS TRAP!


ENOUGH! FLEE—BACK TO ANGRY BEAR!
YOU'RE IN LUCK, SON! THEY'RE RUNNING FOR IT!

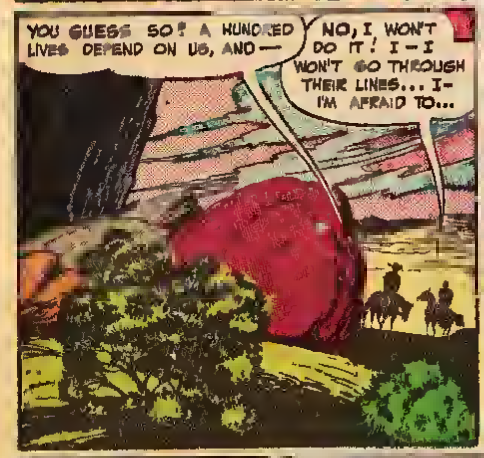

THANKS TO YOU, MISTER! YOU SAVED MY LIFE!
FORGET IT! BUT TELL ME—HOW COME THEY WERE CHASING YOU? I THOUGHT THE INDIANS IN THESE PARTS WERE FRIENDLY!

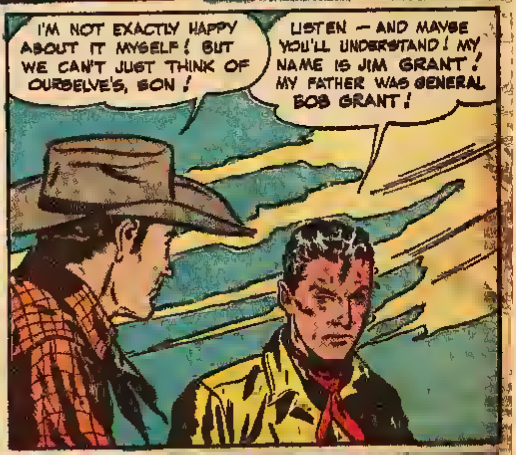

SO DID I! I'VE BEEN TRAPPING IN THE HILLS FOR MONTHS! BUT, TODAY—I CAME ACROSS A HUGE WAR PARTY OF CROW INDIANS LED BY ANGRY BEAR! AND THEY WERE HEADING SOUTH!

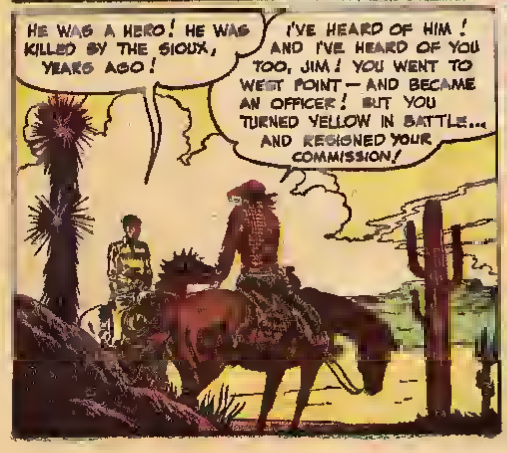

A CROW WAR PARTY— HEADING SOUTH! THEN THEY MUST BE AIMING TO ATTACK THE WHITE SETTLEMENT—LITTLE BOW!
THAT WAS WHAT I FIGURED! THEN THEY SPOTTED ME— AND CAME AFTER ME!


BUT LITTLE BOW WON'T HAVE A CHANCE IF THE INDIANS CATCH THEM BY SURPRISE! THEY'LL BE MASSACRED, WE'LL HAVE TO SNEAK THROUGH THE CROW LINES AND WARN THEM!


AND AT THE SAME TIME— WE'LL HAVE TO GET HELP FROM THE FEDERAL TROOPS AT FORT CRANBY! IT'S UP TO US!
I—I GUESS SO!

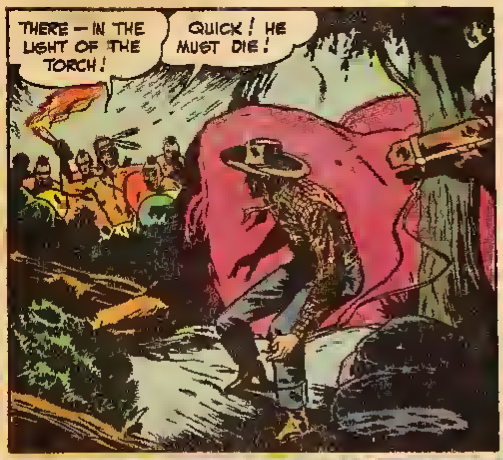

YOU GUESS SO! A HUNDRED LIVES DEPEND ON US, AND—
NO, I WON'T DO IT! I—I WON'T GO THROUGH THEIR LINES... I— I'M AFRAID TO...

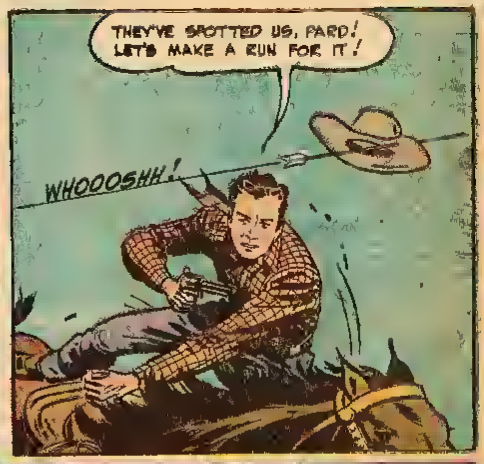

I'M NOT EXACTLY HAPPY ABOUT IT MYSELF! BUT WE CAN'T JUST THINK OF OURSELVES, SON!
LISTEN — AND MAYBE YOU'LL UNDERSTAND! MY NAME IS JIM GRANT! MY FATHER WAS GENERAL BOB GRANT!


HE WAS A HERO! HE WAS KILLED BY THE SIOUX, YEARS AGO!
I'VE HEARD OF HIM! AND I'VE HEARD OF YOU TOO, JIM! YOU WENT TO WEST POINT—AND BECAME AN OFFICER! BUT YOU TURNED YELLOW IN BATTLE... AND RESIGNED YOUR COMMISSION!


THAT'S RIGHT! HE WAS A GREAT HERO—AND I—I'M A QUITTER! NOW... DO YOU UNDERSTAND?


NO! ALL I KNOW IS THAT WE HAVE TO WARN THE SETTLERS AT LITTLE BOW.... AND BRING TROOPS FROM FORT CRANBY. WILL YOU HELP ME, GRANT?
I-I CAN'T! I-I'M GOING TO HIDE OUT HERE....
LIKE A MANGY COYOTE, EH? ALL RIGHT—YOU ASKED FOR IT! MY DAD KNEW YOUR FATHER—AND THE TRUTH ABOUT HIM WAS THAT HE WAS A COWARD, TOO! I RECKON IT RUNS IN THE FAMILY...BOTH PHONIES!
MY FATHER ....NOT A HERO?
THAT'S RIGHT! AND NOW—SO LONG! GRANT, I HOPE YOU CAN LIVE WITH YOUR CONSCIENCE!
AWAY MONTE RIDES....DRIVEN BY A GRIM DETERMINATION!
I'LL WAIT FOR NIGHT TO TRY TO GET THROUGH THE INDIAN LINES! AND MEANWHILE....IT WON'T HURT TO PRAY!
THAT NIGHT...
THERE THEY ARE! GRANT WAS RIGHT...THERE MUST BE THOUSANDS—FILLING THE ENTIRE VALLEY!
QUIET, PARDNER! WE'LL HAVE TO TRY TO GET BETWEEN TWO CAMPFIRES...
BUT SUDDENLY!
LISTEN—IN FOREST! SOMEONE CREEPS!
I SEE HIM! A WHITE MAN—AND HIS PONY!
HE SPIES ON US! SLAY HIM!

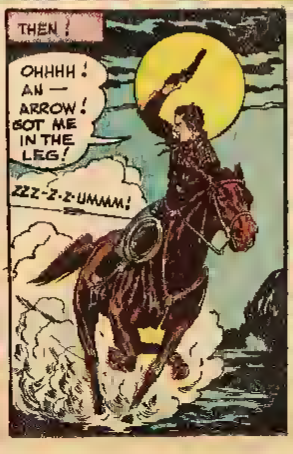

THERE — IN THE LIGHT OF THE TORCH!
QUICK! HE MUST DIE!


THEY'VE SPOTTED US, PARD! LET'S MAKE A RUN FOR IT!
WHOOOSHH!

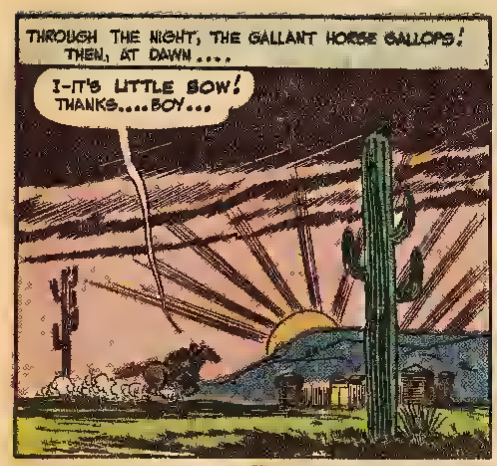

BUT FIRST---LET'S GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT!
AGGHH! MY HAND!
BANG

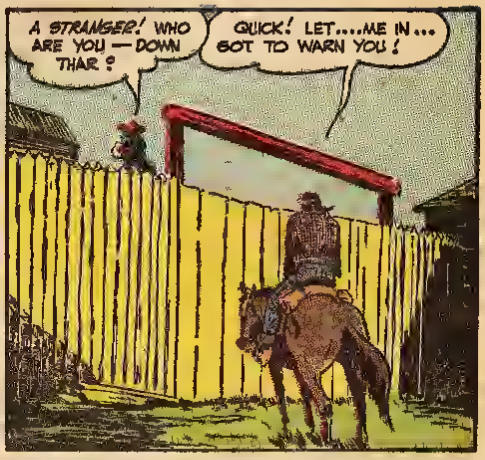

FASTER, PARD! FASTER!


WE'RE ALMOST THROUGH THEIR LINES! LOOKS AS IF...WE MAY ...MAKE IT!


THEN!
OHHHH! AN — ARROW! GOT ME IN THE LEG!
ZZZ-Z-Z-UMMM!

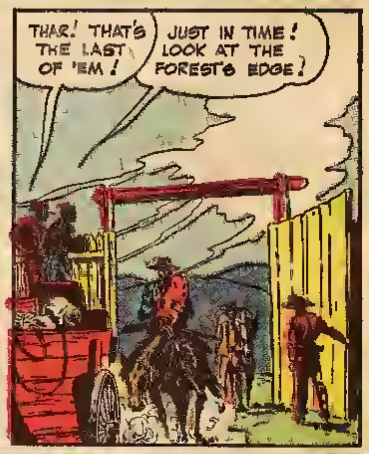

EVEN IF I PASS OUT, PARD, KEEP GOING! WE'VE GOT — TO REACH — LITTLE BOW...

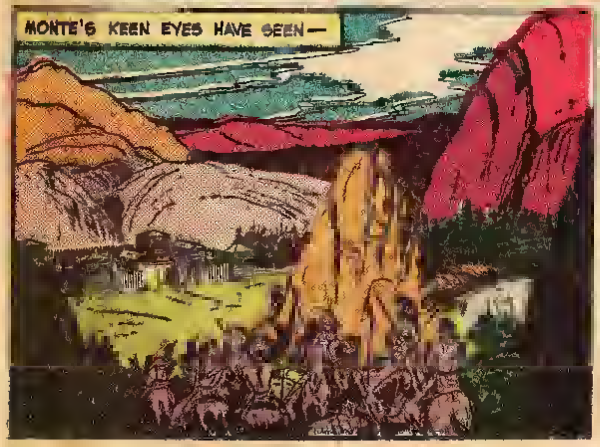

THROUGH THE NIGHT, THE GALLANT HORSE GALLOPS! THEN, AT DAWN....
I-IT'S LITTLE BOW! THANKS....BOY...


A STRANGER! WHO ARE YOU — DOWN THAR?
QUICK! LET....ME IN... GOT TO WARN YOU!


SCANT MOMENTS LATER..
VUH SAY THAT ANGRY BEAR AND HIS CROWS ARE GOIN' TO ATTACK US, MONTE?
THAT'S RIGHT! I JUST MANAGED TO GET THROUGH THEIR LINES!


GET ALL YOUR FARMERS AND THEIR FAMILIES INTO THE STOCKADE! HURRY! AND TIE UP MY LEG SO I CAN WALK! I'LL BE ALL RIGHT!


THAR! THAT'S THE LAST OF 'EM!
JUST IN TIME! LOOK AT THE FOREST'S EDGE!

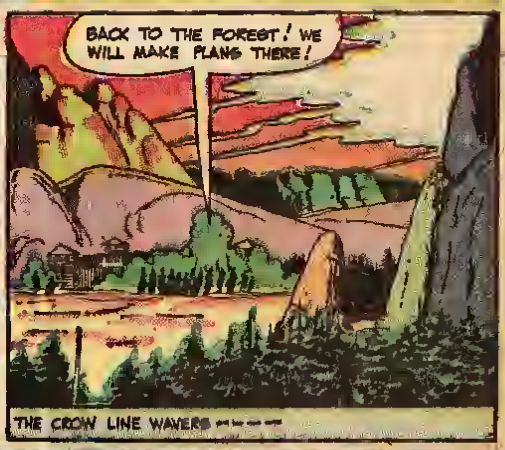

MONTE'S KEEN EYES HAVE SEEN—


NOW! WARRIORS OF THE CROW — ATTACK!
WE FOLLOW YOU, ANGRY BEAR!

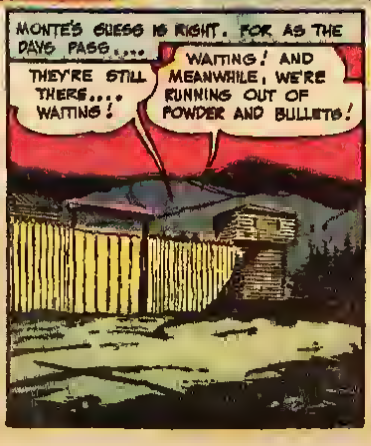

THEY'RE COMIN'! SHOOT! SHOOT!
NO! HOLD YOUR FIRE.... AND WHEN THEY GET WITHIN RANGE, LET THEM HAVE IT ALL AT ONCE!

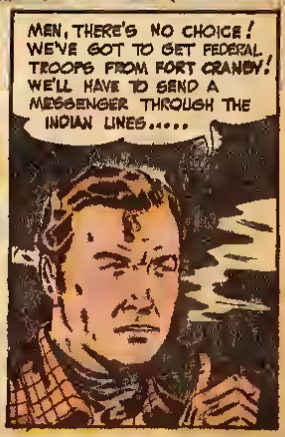

THE WAR PARTY APPROACHES! THEN...
AIEE! THEY STRIKE WITH THE FANGS OF THE SERPENT!
KEEP GOING FORWARD! DO NOT STOP!
BAM! BAM! BAM!


THEY'RE STILL COMING, MONTE!
THEN KEEP BLASTING THEM! THEY CAN'T TAKE IT FOREVER!


BACK TO THE FOREST! WE WILL MAKE PLANS THERE!
THE CROW LINE WAVERS ----


THEY'RE RETREATING! WE'RE SAVED, MONTE!
FOR THE TIME BEING — MAYBE! BUT THEY WON'T GIVE UP! THEY'VE LOST TOO MANY MEN! INSTEAD THEY'LL PROBABLY LAY SIEGE TO US!


MONTE'S GUESS IS RIGHT. FOR AS THE DAYS PASS....
THEY'RE STILL THERE.... WAITING!
WAITING! AND MEANWHILE, WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF POWDER AND BULLETS!

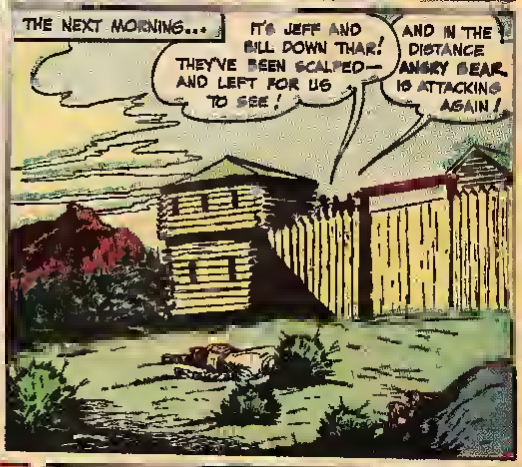

MEN, THERE'S NO CHOICE! WE'VE GOT TO GET FEDERAL TROOPS FROM FORT CRANDY! WE'LL HAVE TO SEND A MESSENGER THROUGH THE INDIAN LINES.....

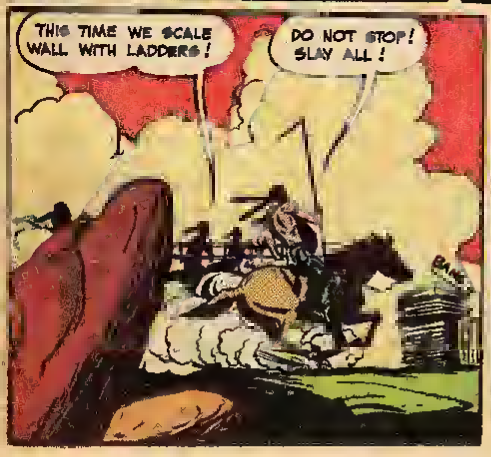

I'LL RIDE FOR HELP!
NO, MONTE! YORE LEG IS STILL TOO WEAK! I'LL GO...
AND ME, TOO!


UNDER COVER OF NIGHT.....
GOOD LUCK, JEFF, BILL...
THANKS, MONTE!

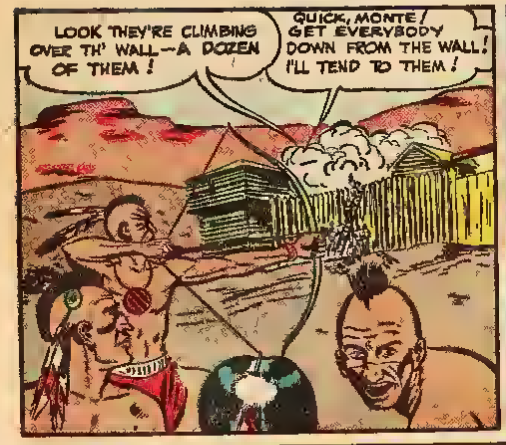

NOTHING'S HAPPENED SO FAR! THEY MUST HAVE REACHED THE INDIAN LINES BY NOW! MAYBE THEY'VE GOTTEN THROUGH...
WAIT! LISTEN!


BANG! BANG!
SHOTS! THEY'VE BEEN DISCOVERED!

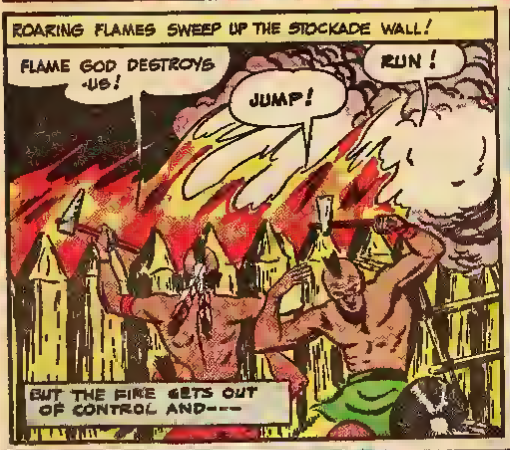

THE NEXT MORNING...
IT'S JEFF AND BILL DOWN THAR! THEY'VE BEEN SCALPED— AND LEFT FOR US TO SEE!
AND IN THE DISTANCE ANGRY BEAR IS ATTACKING AGAIN!


THIS TIME WE SCALE WALL WITH LADDERS!
DO NOT STOP! SLAY ALL!


NICE SHOT, MONTE! YUH GOT HIM!
BUT THEY'RE COMIN' CLOSER-- AND WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF SHOT AND POWDER!


LOOK THEY'RE CLIMBING OVER TH' WALL—A DOZEN OF THEM!
QUICK, MONTE! GET EVERYBODY DOWN FROM THE WALL! I'LL TEND TO THEM!

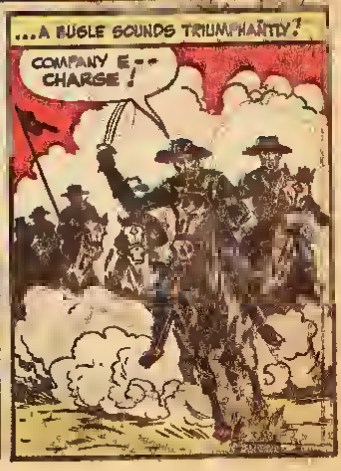

I KEPT THIS OIL-SOAKED STRAW HERE FOR A REASON! LET THEM FIND OUT WHY!


ROARING FLAMES SWEEP UP THE STOCKADE WALL!
FLAME GOD DESTROYS US!
JUMP!
RUN!
BUT THE FIRE GETS OUT OF CONTROL AND---


THEY'VE RETREATED MONTE!
YES! BUT I KNOW THOSE REDSKINS! THEY'LL BE BACK! AND NOW THE FIRE'S SPREADING SO WE'LL HAVE TO FIGHT IT AS WELL AS THE INDIANS!


STOCKADE BURN DOWN!
NOW WE ATTACK... AND TRIUMPH!


THE WAR PARTY RACES FORWARD, EAGER FOR THE MASSACRE! BUT AT THE SAME TIME....

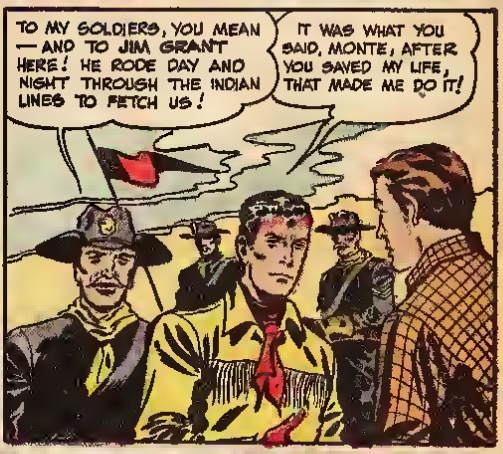

...A BUGLE SOUNDS TRIUMPHANTLY!
COMPANY E-- CHARGE!

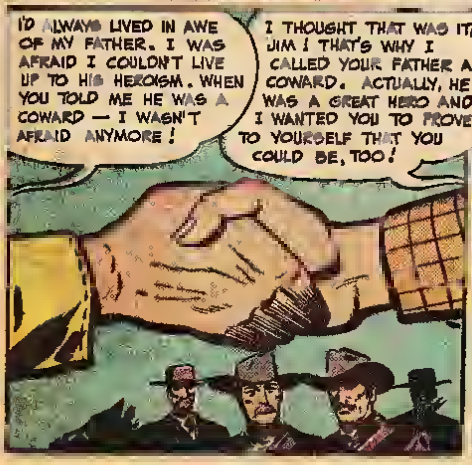

THE FEDERAL TROOPS RACE TO THE RESCUE!
CARBINES READY! FIRE!
BAM! BAM! BAM!


AI-EEE! BLUECOATS HAVE COME!
FIGHT THEM! DO NOT YIELD!


WE'VE STILL GOT A FEW ROUNDS LEFT! LET'S HAMMER ANGRY BEAR FROM THE OTHER SIDE —WHILE HE LEAST EXPECTS IT!
WE'RE WITH YUH, MONTE!


UNDER THE COMBINED ATTACK!
THEY'RE RUNNING FER IT — AND THIS TIME FER GOOD!
THANKS TO YOU, CAPTAIN!


TO MY SOLDIERS, YOU MEAN — AND TO JIM GRANT HERE! HE RODE DAY AND NIGHT THROUGH THE INDIAN LINES TO FETCH US!
IT WAS WHAT YOU SAID, MONTE, AFTER YOU SAVED MY LIFE, THAT MADE ME DO IT!


I'D ALWAYS LIVED IN AWE OF MY FATHER. I WAS AFRAID I COULDN'T LIVE UP TO HIS HEROISM. WHEN YOU TOLD ME HE WAS A COWARD — I WASN'T AFRAID ANYMORE!
I THOUGHT THAT WAS IT, JIM! THAT'S WHY I CALLED YOUR FATHER A COWARD. ACTUALLY, HE WAS A GREAT HERO AND I WANTED YOU TO PROVE TO YOURSELF THAT YOU COULD BE, TOO!


AND WHEN THE WAR OFFICE HEARS OF JIM'S BRAVERY, I'M CERTAIN HE'LL GET HIS COMMISSION BACK!
CONGRATULATIONS— LIEUTENANT JIM GRANT, U.S. ARMY!

RIVER RESCUE

ANOTHER EXCITING "R.C." AND QUICKIE ADVENTURE!

"R.C." and QUICKIE STOP THEIR FISHING TO ENJOY A FROSTY ROYAL CROWN COLA PICK-UP. WHEN SUDDENLY THEY HEAR A SICKENING

CRASH!

OH!

OH!

OHOOOOOO!

WH-A-A-CK!

YIPES, "R.C." LOOK!

FASTER, QUICKIE! THE GIRL'S SINKING. SHE MUST BE HURT!

I'M HURRYING (PUFF) -GET YOUR SHOES OFF AND GET READY TO JUMP!

QUICK AS A FLASH, "R.C." RIPS OFF HIS SHOES.

GOOD THING I HAD THAT R.C. I'LL NEED PLENTY OF ENERGY!

"R.C." AND QUICKIE ALWAYS DRINK ROYAL CROWN COLA. IT'S BEST-TASTING, FULL OF QUICK ENERGY, COOL AND REFRESHING!

THAT'S THE SPOT, "R.C."

GOT HER! NOW IF I CAN ONLY LIFT HER TO THE SURFACE IN TIME....

SHE'S GONNA BE ALL RIGHT, QUICKIE. THE CRASH MUST'VE KNOCKED HER OUT

GREAT WORK, "R.C." SHE'S COMING TO

WH-WHERE AM I ?

LATER AT GIRL'S HOME

GOSH, FELLAS, HOW CAN I EVER THANK YOU!

YOU'VE DONE PLENTY, MISS

COOL OFF WITH BEST-TASTING ROYAL CROWN COLA! IT'S THE ONLY COLA THAT GIVES YOU ALL THREE: (1) COOL REFRESHMENT, (2) TWO FULL GLASSES, (3) BEST BY TASTE-TEST FLAVOR.

U-MMM! THIS BEST-TASTING R.C. IS A WONDERFUL REWARD

ROYAL CROWN R.C. COLA

SON OF THE TURTLE

A GRAY HAWK Adventure

By Dick Kraus

GRAY HAWK crouched, scarcely daring to breath, in the forest swamp. He was up to his waist in dark, slow-moving water. His head and shoulders were partly screened by high reeds and by the twisted roots of a great dead tree. But if the Wolverine warriors should come closer, should detect the hiding youth . . .

". . . I would have no chance to escape," realized Gray Hawk. "Here in the swamp it is impossible to run. They would be on me in a moment, and an Otapi scalp would hang in the lodges of the Wolverine."

Gray Hawk crouched lower in the water as icy fear clutched at his heart.

Many times had he met and fought the perils of the forest. Many times had he fought against enemy warriors in equal combat. But today, while hunting deer, he had been seen by five lurking Wolverine braves. At once, shouting triumphant war cries, they had raced at him, brandishing weapons.

Five to one the odds had been. Five full-grown men against a single Otapi youth. There is no valor in inviting certain death. Gray Hawk had lunged into the forest, swift as a young deer. Immediately, the Wolverine warriors had raced after him, spreading out in a fan.

For perhaps half an hour the chase had continued, with the scalp-hungry pursuers loosing shaft after shaft at their fleet quarry. Once Gray Hawk had stumbled, half-falling. As he went down, a feathered arrow hummed through the air, scant inches above him.

Then he had seen the swamp.

Stumbling into the bog, making as little noise as possible, the son of the Otapi chief huddled behind the protective reeds, beneath the twisted old roots. At first there was no sign of the enemy. As he waited, unmoving, Gray Hawk watched a mud turtle sunning himself on one of the extended roots. It was a big turtle, and an old one. His brown shell was wrinkled by the years, even as the face of an elder of the tribe.

". . . if only I were as safe as that turtle," mused Gray Hawk.

Then he had heard his pursuers crashing through the underbrush. Shouting, one to the other, they had evidently lost his trail. Gray Hawk smiled to himself with satisfaction as he heard their angry cries.

"Where is he, clumsy ones?"

"Do you see a sign of him, Running Bear?"

Everywhere they searched. For a moment, they seemed to be drawing away into the forest. Their voices grew more and more faint. Gray Hawk was about to lift himself up out of the water when he heard an excited cry.

"Behold! By the water's edge. A moccasin print. It is his. He hides in the waters of the swamp."

All at once he could see them all, standing on the bank, looking in his direction. Five of them, all heavily armed. So far they could not see him, hidden as he was by the long, hollow reeds. But if they were to explore the swamp waters, they would be sure to come upon him. And with that discovery would come certain death for the Otapi youth. He had to do something. He had to think of some plan to escape.

A SUDDEN idea came to Gray Hawk. What if he were to cut one of the long reeds and use it to breathe with as he moved underwater? Often as a child, playing in the river with other boys, he had done this. The only thing visible from the surface would be the moving reed.

"But that would be too much," he hissed to himself. "These warriors are too alert. Their eyes are too keen. They would see the moving reed at once . . . and it would mean my life."

(CONTINUED AFTER NEXT STORY)

MONTE HALE in PRAIRIE PLAGUE

THE BUBONIC PLAGUE!

DOC BLABBER DISCOVERED IT!

WE'VE GOT TUH CLEAR OUT OF TOWN--OR WE'LL ALL DIE!

FOR MANY YEARS, THE TRAVELING MEDICINE SHOW WAS A LONG AWAITED TREAT IN THE LIVES OF FRONTIER TOWNS! DOC BLABBER KNEW THIS--AND HE KNEW HOW TO SWAY A CROWD TO HIS OWN CUNNING ADVANTAGE! WHAT MONTE HALE HAD TO FIND OUT WAS-- DID DOC BLABBER AIM TO SAVE PEOPLE OR TO SWINDLE THEM?

THE HEALTHO MEDICINE SHOW HAS COME TO TOWN!

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, BEFORE YOU, YOU SEE THE MAGIC ELIXIR, THE NEW AND POTENT HEALTHO! IT IS GUARANTEED TO CURE MEASLES, RHEUMATISM, HEARTBURN, HEADACHES...

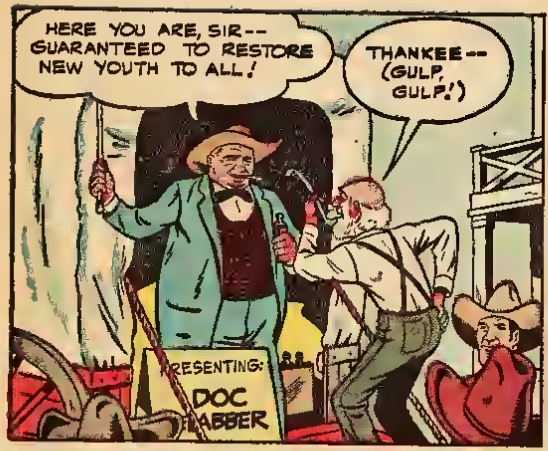
PRESENTING DOC BLABBER

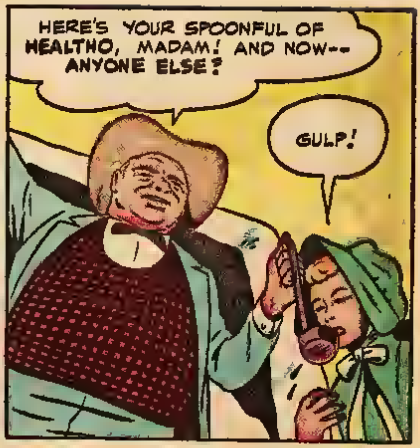
...DIPHTHERIA, TYPHOID, BROKEN LIMBS--- AND NUMEROUS OTHER AILMENTS!

WHEW! IF IT CAN DO ALL THAT, IT'LL PUT EVERY DOCTOR IN THE COUNTRY OUT OF BUSINESS!

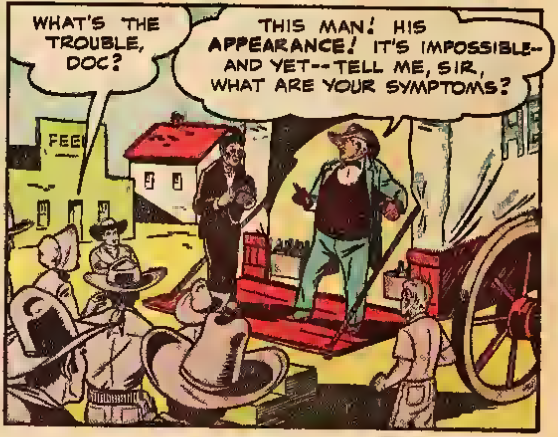
MONTE HALE LISTENS AS DOC BLABBER MAKES AN OFFER!

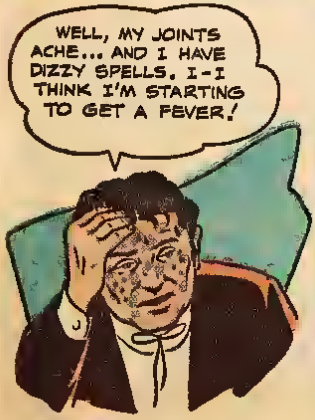
MY FRIENDS, WE ARE PRACTICALLY GIVING AWAY THE MAGIC *HEALTHO* AT THE NEW LOW PRICE OF A DOLLAR A BOTTLE! AND TO INTRODUCE IT, I WILL GIVE THE FIRST FIVE PERSONS TO COME TO THE PLATFORM A FREE SWIG!

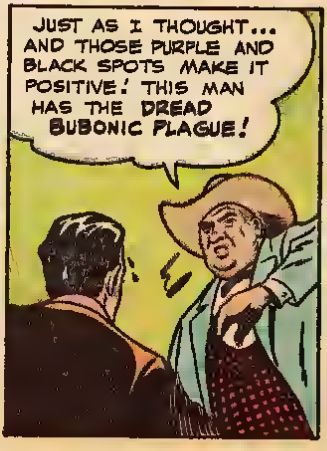

HERE YOU ARE, SIR-- GUARANTEED TO RESTORE NEW YOUTH TO ALL!
THANKEE-- (GULP, GULP!)
RESENTING:
DOC
LABBER


HERE'S YOUR SPOONFUL OF HEALTHO, MADAM! AND NOW-- ANYONE ELSE?
GULP!


C'N I HAVE SOME, DOC?
CERTAINLY, MY DEAR-- GREAT SCOTT! NO! IT CAN'T BE!

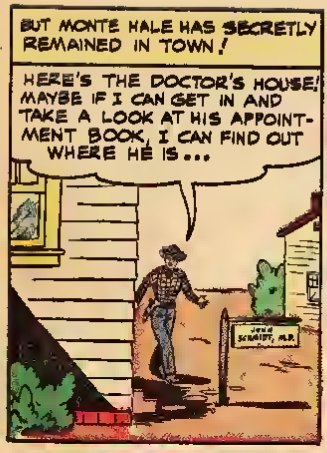

WHAT'S THE TROUBLE, DOC?
THIS MAN! HIS APPEARANCE! IT'S IMPOSSIBLE-- AND YET--TELL ME, SIR, WHAT ARE YOUR SYMPTOMS?
FEE


WELL, MY JOINTS ACHE... AND I HAVE DIZZY SPELLS. I-I THINK I'M STARTING TO GET A FEVER!


JUST AS I THOUGHT... AND THOSE PURPLE AND BLACK SPOTS MAKE IT POSITIVE! THIS MAN HAS THE DREAD BUBONIC PLAGUE!

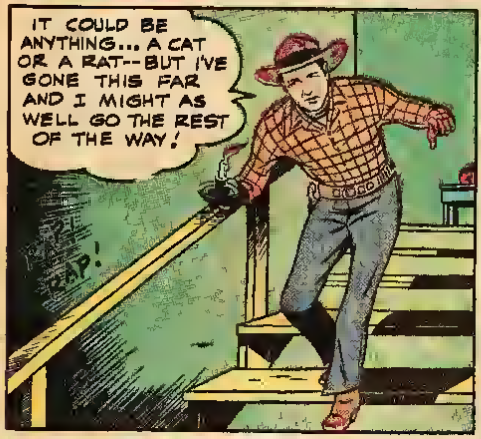

BUBONIC? NO!
WE'LL ALL CATCH IT!
IT'LL KILL US ALL! WHAT'LL WE DO, DOC?

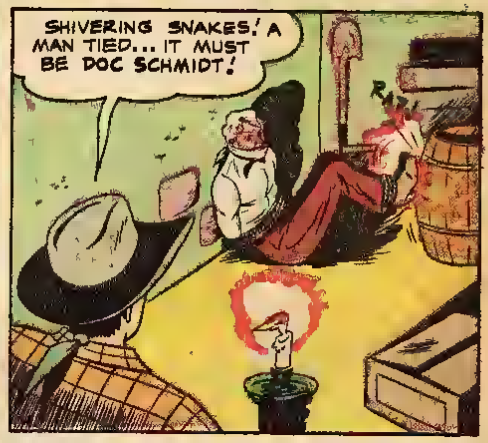

BUT MONTE HALE IS SUSPICIOUS OF BLABBER'S QUICK DIAGNOSIS!
HMMM! I'D JUST LIKE TO HAVE ANOTHER DOCTOR TAKE A LOOK AT THAT MAN AND SEE IF HE THINKS IT'S BUBONIC!
TELL ME, MISTER, IS THERE ANOTHER DOCTOR IN TOWN?
YEAH, DOC SCHMIDT, DOWN ON MAIN STREET! BUT I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM ALL DAY! MEBBE HE'S OUT ON A CALL!
MY FRIENDS, THIS IS ONE DISEASE THAT EVEN HEALTHO CANNOT AID! TO SAVE US ALL, WE MUST EVACUATE THE TOWN! HURRY! TAKE YOUR CHILDREN--AND SET UP A CAMP OUTSIDE TOWN!
AND MEANWHILE, I WILL STAY IN TOWN--TO TRY TO SAVE THE LIFE OF THIS POOR UNFORTUNATE--AT THE RISK OF MY OWN!
UHH, THANKS, DOC!
THE TOWNSFOLK RACE TO THEIR HOMES, AND...
HURRY, BESS! WE GOT TO GIT THE WHOLE FAMILY OUTTA TOWN, LIKE DOC BLABBER SAID...
... OR WE'LL CATCH BUBONIC LIKE THAT POOR FELLER!
SOON...
WELL, WE'VE GOT A REGULAR CAMP HERE--RECKON WE WON'T CATCH IT NOW!
THE DOC CERTAINLY DESERVES CREDIT, THOUGH. HE'S A REAL HERO--RISKING HIS OWN LIFE!

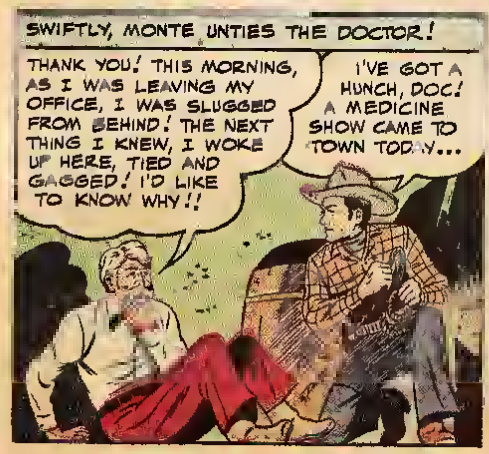

BUT MONTE HALE HAS SECRETLY REMAINED IN TOWN!
HERE'S THE DOCTOR'S HOUSE! MAYBE IF I CAN GET IN AND TAKE A LOOK AT HIS APPOINTMENT BOOK, I CAN FIND OUT WHERE HE IS...
JOHN SCHMIDT, M.D.

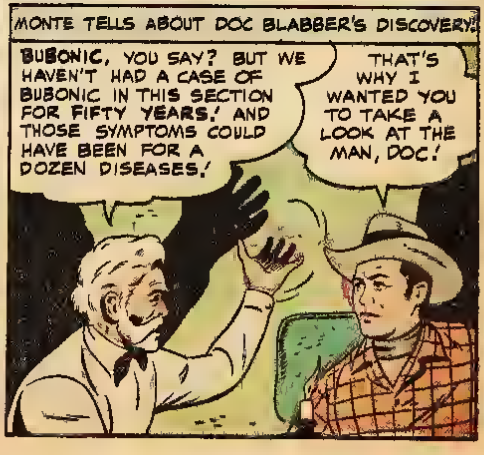

STRANGE! THE APPOINTMENT BOOK DOESN'T SHOW ANY ENTRY FOR THIS AFTERNOON! WHERE COULD HE BE THEN?

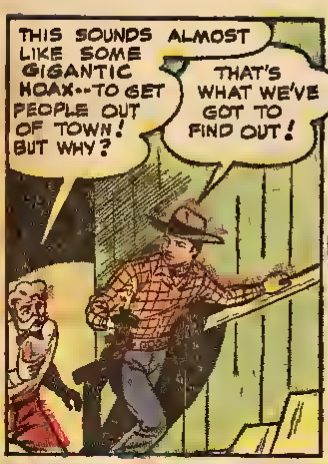

RECKON IT'S USELESS! WAIT! ISN'T THAT A NOISE COMING FROM THE CELLAR?
RAP! RAP!


IT COULD BE ANYTHING... A CAT OR A RAT--BUT I'VE GONE THIS FAR AND I MIGHT AS WELL GO THE REST OF THE WAY!
RAP!


SHIVERING SNAKES! A MAN TIED... IT MUST BE DOC SCHMIDT!

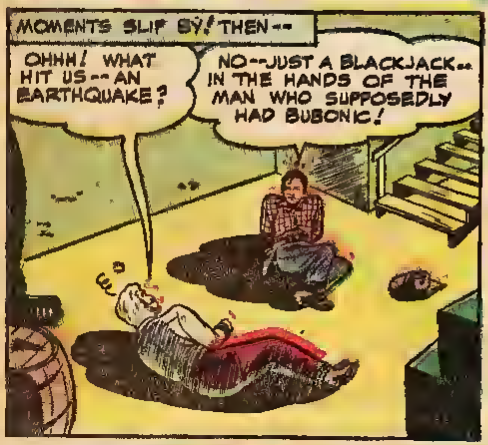

SWIFTLY, MONTE UNTIES THE DOCTOR!
THANK YOU! THIS MORNING, AS I WAS LEAVING MY OFFICE, I WAS SLUGGED FROM BEHIND! THE NEXT THING I KNEW, I WOKE UP HERE, TIED AND GAGGED! I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHY!!
I'VE GOT A HUNCH, DOC! A MEDICINE SHOW CAME TO TOWN TODAY...

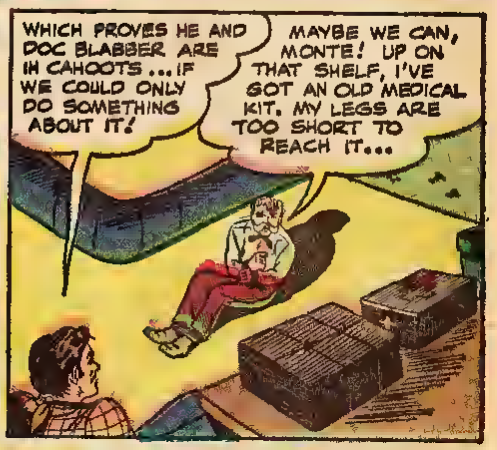

MONTE TELLS ABOUT DOC BLABBER'S DISCOVERY!
BUBONIC, YOU SAY? BUT WE HAVEN'T HAD A CASE OF BUBONIC IN THIS SECTION FOR FIFTY YEARS! AND THOSE SYMPTOMS COULD HAVE BEEN FOR A DOZEN DISEASES!
THAT'S WHY I WANTED YOU TO TAKE A LOOK AT THE MAN, DOC!

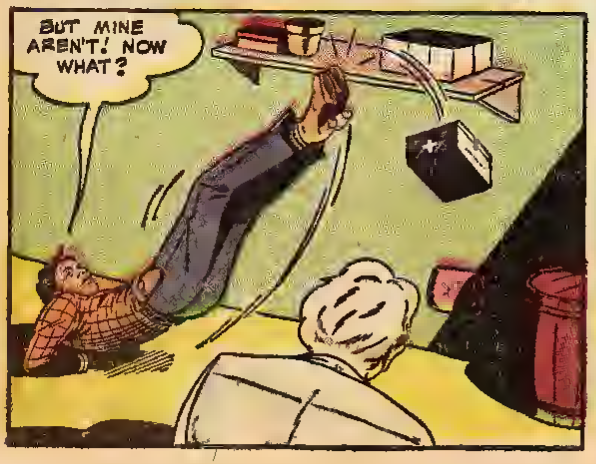

THIS SOUNDS ALMOST LIKE SOME GIGANTIC HOAX--TO GET PEOPLE OUT OF TOWN! BUT WHY?
THAT'S WHAT WE'VE GOT TO FIND OUT!

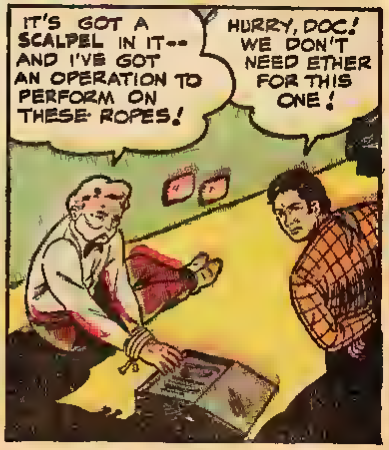

BUT SUDDENLY!
DUCK, DOC! IT'S THE MAN-- UGH!
BAM!


THEY'RE BOTH OUT COLD! IT WAS A LUCKY THING I TAILED THE COWBOY WHEN HE STAYED IN TOWN--AFTER THE DOC AND I DID OUR ACT! NOW TO TIE 'EM BOTH UP!

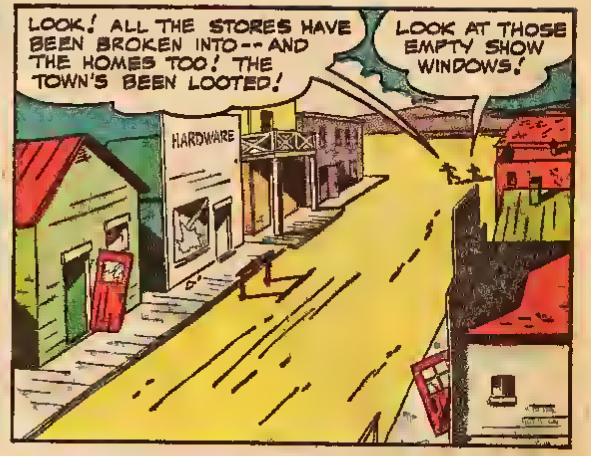

MOMENTS SLIP BY! THEN--
OHHH! WHAT HIT US--AN EARTHQUAKE?
NO--JUST A BLACKJACK-- IN THE HANDS OF THE MAN WHO SUPPOSEDLY HAD BUBONIC!

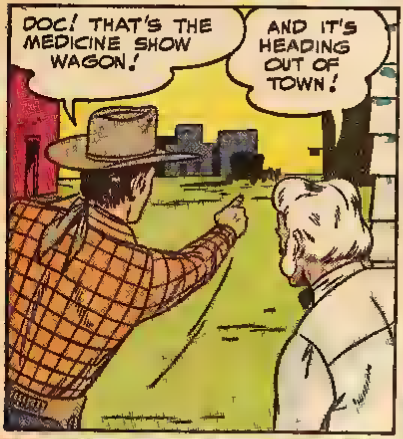

WHICH PROVES HE AND DOC BLABBER ARE IN CAHOOTS ... IF WE COULD ONLY DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!
MAYBE WE CAN, MONTE! UP ON THAT SHELF, I'VE GOT AN OLD MEDICAL KIT. MY LEGS ARE TOO SHORT TO REACH IT...

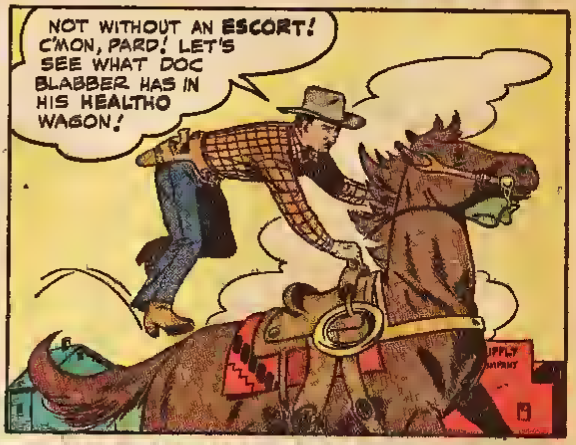

BUT MINE AREN'T! NOW WHAT?

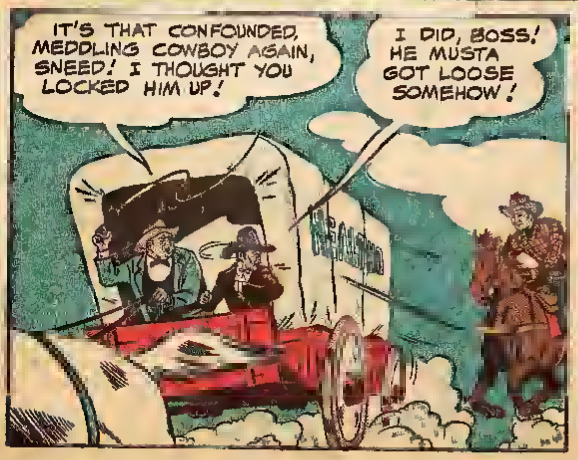

IT'S GOT A SCALPEL IN IT-- AND I'VE GOT AN OPERATION TO PERFORM ON THESE ROPES!
HURRY, DOC! WE DON'T NEED ETHER FOR THIS ONE!


THERE! WE'RE FREE! NICE CUTTING, DOC!
IT WAS A PLEASURE!

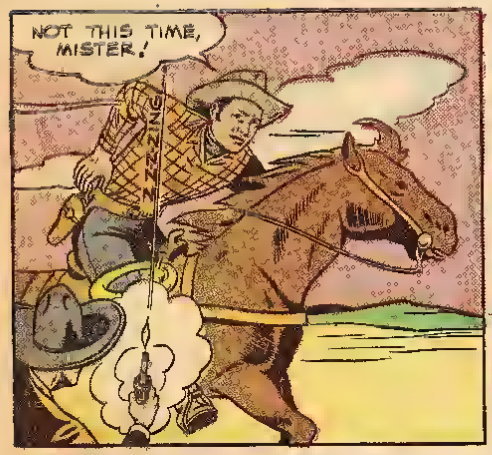

LOOK! ALL THE STORES HAVE BEEN BROKEN INTO--AND THE HOMES TOO! THE TOWN'S BEEN LOOTED!
LOOK AT THOSE EMPTY SHOW WINDOWS!
HARDWARE

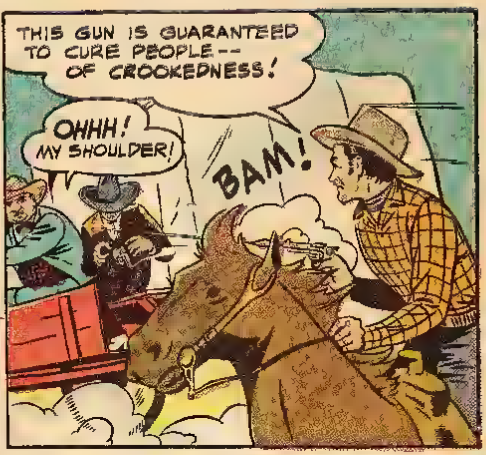

DOC! THAT'S THE MEDICINE SHOW WAGON!
AND IT'S HEADING OUT OF TOWN!


NOT WITHOUT AN ESCORT! C'MON, PARD! LET'S SEE WHAT DOC BLABBER HAS IN HIS HEALTHO WAGON!

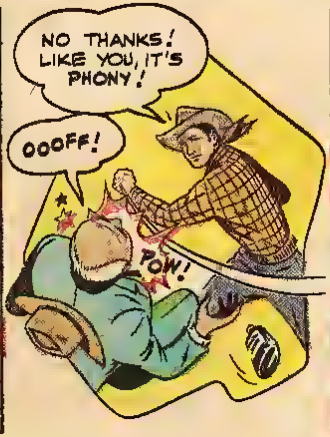

IT'S THAT CONFOUNDED, MEDDLING COWBOY AGAIN, SNEED! I THOUGHT YOU LOCKED HIM UP!
I DID, BOSS! HE MUSTA GOT LOOSE SOMEHOW!

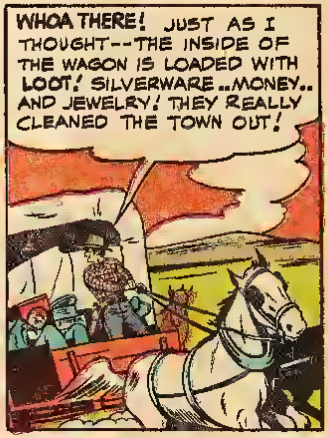

BUT I'LL FIX THAT--RIGHT NOW!
BANG!

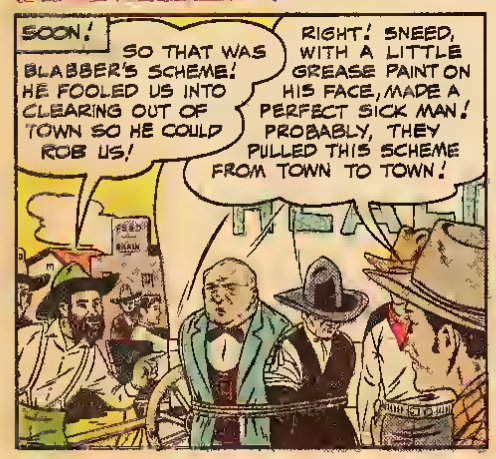

NOT THIS TIME, MISTER!
ZZZZZZ

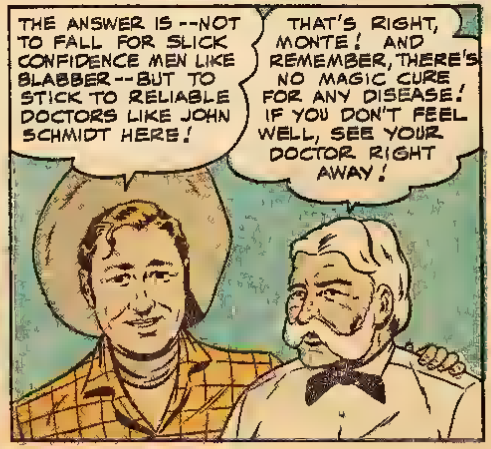

THIS GUN IS GUARANTEED TO CURE PEOPLE -- OF CROOKEDNESS!
OHHH! MY SHOULDER!
BAM!


MIND IF I COME ABOARD?
COME AHEAD, SUCKER! I WANT TO GIVE YOU A DOSE OF HEALTHO!


NO THANKS! LIKE YOU, IT'S PHONY!
OOOFF!
POW!


WHOA THERE! JUST AS I THOUGHT--THE INSIDE OF THE WAGON IS LOADED WITH LOOT! SILVERWARE..MONEY.. AND JEWELRY! THEY REALLY CLEANED THE TOWN OUT!


SOON!
SO THAT WAS BLABBER'S SCHEME! HE FOOLED US INTO CLEARING OUT OF TOWN SO HE COULD ROB US!
RIGHT! SNEED, WITH A LITTLE GREASE PAINT ON HIS FACE, MADE A PERFECT SICK MAN! PROBABLY, THEY PULLED THIS SCHEME FROM TOWN TO TOWN!


THE ANSWER IS --NOT TO FALL FOR SLICK CONFIDENCE MEN LIKE BLABBER--BUT TO STICK TO RELIABLE DOCTORS LIKE JOHN SCHMIDT HERE!
THAT'S RIGHT, MONTE! AND REMEMBER, THERE'S NO MAGIC CURE FOR ANY DISEASE! IF YOU DON'T FEEL WELL, SEE YOUR DOCTOR RIGHT AWAY!

Abandoning the idea, he sank back for a moment. A few feet from him, the mud turtle's head came out from under his shell. Stretching his long, parchment-like neck, the creature looked at Gray Hawk with a little yellow eye that seemed to wink.

Gray Hawk squinted through the reeds at the Wolverine warriors on the opposite bank. One of them was cupping his hands to shout out over the water. The harsh sound of his voice reached Gray Hawk. He was mocking him. "You think you are safe, Otapi youth, hiding in the swamp. But we will search the water for you, coward, and we will take your scalp to our village to show our elders. We will find you soon, Son of the Turtle!"

Son of the Turtle!

The scornful words seem to re-echo in Gray Hawk's mind. Son of the Turtle! They were calling him a coward, a child of the lazy, slow-moving turtle. And yet...

A smile slowly spread over Gray Hawk's face. There was a chance. A chance that he would have to take. Slowly, cautiously, his slim arm reached out. His brown hand grasped the turtle firmly. The animal's feet clawed wildly for a moment, then disappeared into the shell. Next, with his knife, Gray Hawk cut a long reed. The Wolverine braves were beginning to search for him . . . he would have to move fast.

PERHAPS FIVE MINUTES later, on the opposite bank, one of the Wolverine warriors clutched the arm of the man nearest him.

Without speaking, he pointed out into the water. There, moving slowly along the swamp's placid surface, was a reed, pointing upright out of the water. The other warrior's expression did not change. "It is a reed, floating in the water. What of it?" he asked.

The first man smiled. "Who ever heard of a reed floating, pointing up out of the water? No! Beneath the reed, and breathing through it, is the youth we pursue. So he hopes to escape us."

Within a few moments, all of the Wolverine warriors had gathered at the water's edge, intently watching the moving reed. They followed it along the shoreline, weapons ready, and laughed at the foolish boy who thought he could escape them in this way. Along the bank they went, and around a wide curve. Then the reed began to come closer to the bank.

One of the braves gestured to the others, thumping his chest.

"He thinks he is safe!" he said. "He is going to come out of the water. Watch this."

Clutching his tomahawk, he crouched, close to the water. Then, as the upright reed came within five yards of him, he uttered a shrill war cry, and plunged into the water. For a moment, all that could be seen was the froth of wildly splashing swamp water.

Then the Indian's head appeared above the water, and he climbed rapidly out. In his hand, he held a huge mud turtle. A length of hollow reed had been attached to the turtle's shell with a leather thong in such a way that it pointed up.

"But where is the Otapi youth?" asked one of his friends, puzzled. "What do you have there?"

The brave who had plunged into the water stared at the turtle angrily. "This creature has fooled us. All along, as we were following it along the water's edge thinking it was the boy, it was a turtle. We were fools. We were like children in the hands of a wise magician." Furiously, he threw the freed turtle from him. It swam rapidly away.

IN THE FOREST, Gray Hawk was running hard.

The moment the enemy warriors began to watch the turtle he had prepared as a decoy, and to follow it along the bank, the Otapi youth had known his plan would work. When the Wolverines were far enough away, he had climbed onto the opposite shore and fled through the woods.

Now he was a safe distance away, but still he kept running. And, as he ran, his dark eyes glinted with humor. He could not help laughing, when he realized that it was the scornful enemy braves who had given him the idea that helped him escape.

"When they kept calling me Son of the Turtle," he chuckled. "I decided there was no reason why my 'father' should not help me?"

THE END

The Indian boy, GRAY HAWK, appears in an exciting adventure in every issue of MONTE HALE WESTERN!

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CITY _____ STATE _____

MONTE HALE in COWGIRL COURAGE!

DUCK, BOYS! IT'S THAT BIG GAL AGAIN--- AND SHE'S PLUMB DANGEROUS!

BAM!

BAM!

BAM!

IT TOOK GREAT COURAGE ON THE PART OF BOTH PIONEER MEN AND WOMEN TO SETTLE THE TERRITORIES OF THE WEST! BUT HOW OFTEN WAS A RANCH DEVELOPED BY A BAND OF DARING COWGIRLS —FIGHTING AND RANCHING ON THEIR OWN? AND HOW OFTEN DID MONTE HALE PUT ON SKIRTS AND A WIG TO BATTLE OUTLAWS?

MONTE HALE SEES A CHANCE TO DO A GOOD TURN!

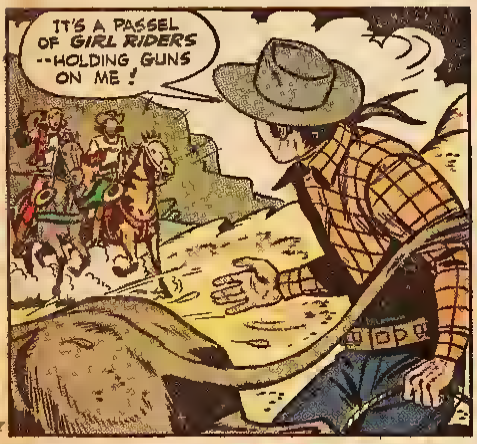
WHOA, PARDNER! LOOKS AS IF THOSE DOGIES ARE CAUGHT IN A MESS OF QUICKSAND!

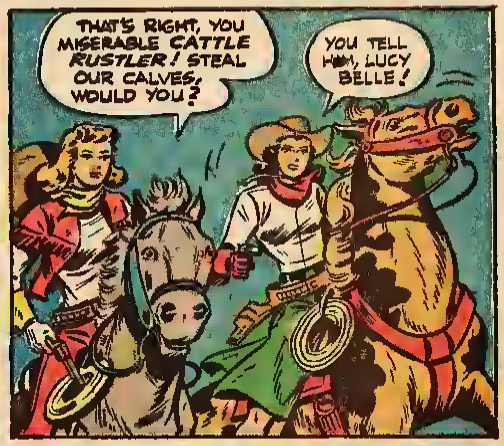
THAT TAKES CARE OF ONE! NOW TO GET THE OTHER!

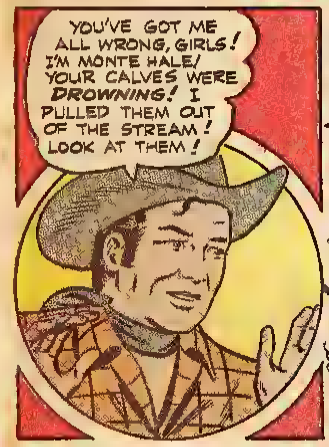
MA-AAH!

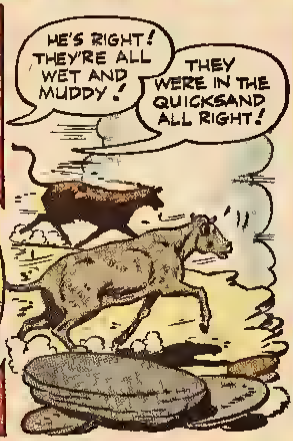
YOU MAVERICKS HAD BETTER BE MORE CAREFUL--- WHAT THE— A SHOT!

BANG!

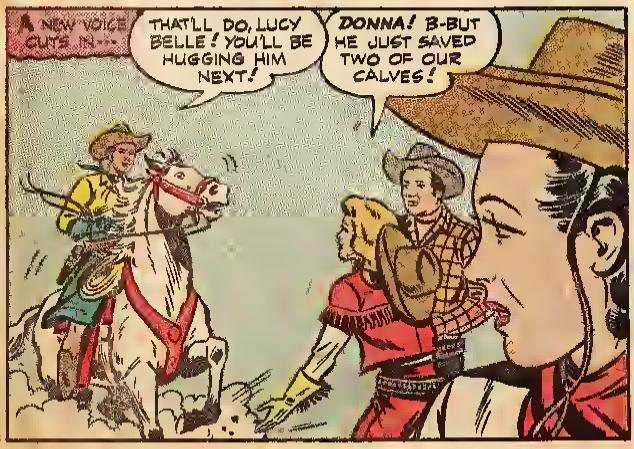

IT'S A PASSEL OF GIRL RIDERS --HOLDING GUNS ON ME!


THAT'S RIGHT, YOU MISERABLE CATTLE RUSTLER! STEAL OUR CALVES, WOULD YOU?
YOU TELL HIM, LUCY BELLE!

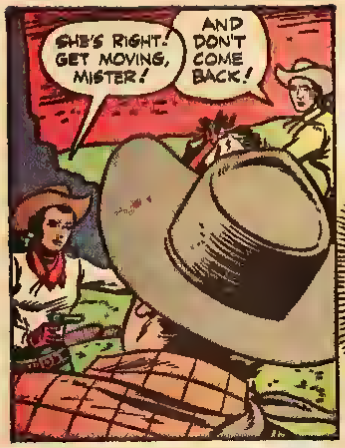

YOU'VE GOT ME ALL WRONG, GIRLS! I'M MONTE HALE! YOUR CALVES WERE DROWNING! I PULLED THEM OUT OF THE STREAM! LOOK AT THEM!


HE'S RIGHT! THEY'RE ALL WET AND MUDDY!
THEY WERE IN THE QUICKSAND ALL RIGHT!

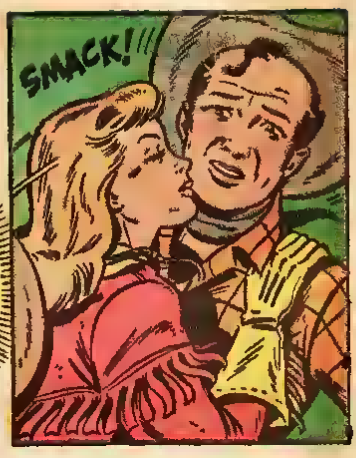

THANKS FOR RESCUING THEM! AND WE'RE SORRY WE SHOT AT YOU!
I JUST KNEW NO MAN THAT HANDSOME COULD BE A RUSTLER!


A NEW VOICE CUTS IN---
THAT'LL DO, LUCY BELLE! YOU'LL BE HUGGING HIM NEXT!
DONNA! B-BUT HE JUST SAVED TWO OF OUR CALVES!

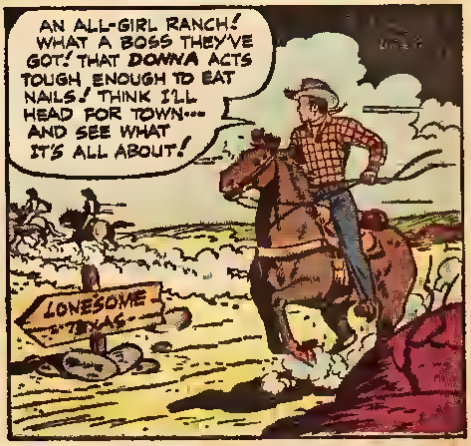

MAYBE HE DID! BUT WE DON'T NEED ANY MEN TO HELP US---HERE ON SKIRT RANCH! REMEMBER OUR OATH? WE'LL GET ALONG WITHOUT MEN! SO GET TO RIDING, STRANGER---UNLESS YOU WANT A DOSE OF LEAD!

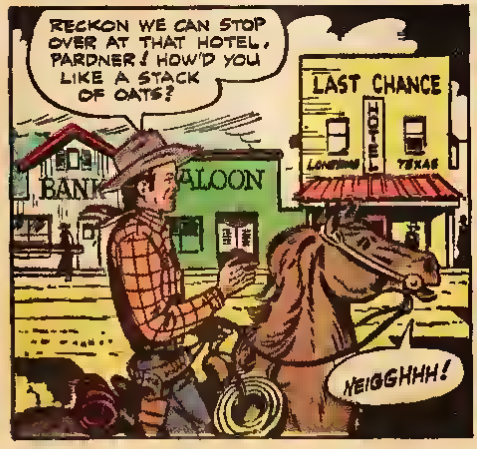

SHE'S RIGHT! GET MOVING, MISTER!
AND DON'T COME BACK!

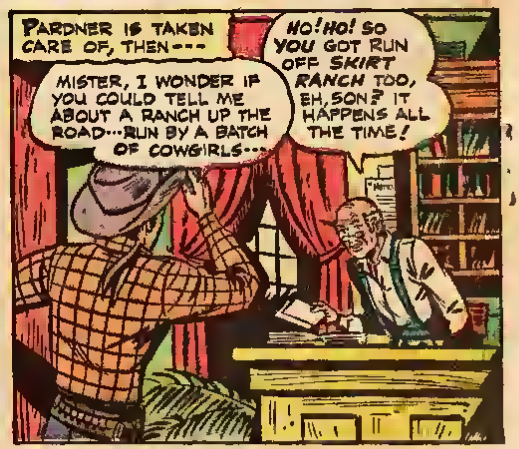

GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT, DONNA--- YOU ARE OUR ELECTED LEADER! BUT EVEN SO--- I'M GOING TO THANK HIM FOR HELPING US, SO THERE!


SMACK!

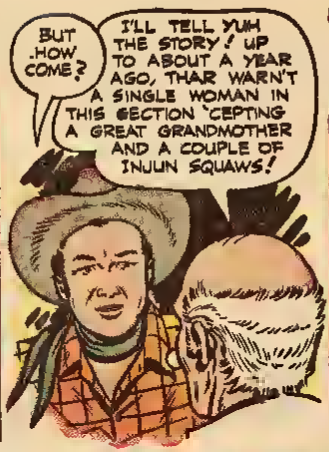

THAT'LL DO, LUCY BELLE! GET BACK TO THE RANCH HOUSE! AND YOU, STRANGER-- HEAD OUT OF HERE!
IF THAT'S THE WAY YOU WANT IT, MAM!


AN ALL-GIRL RANCH! WHAT A BOSS THEY'VE GOT! THAT DONNA ACTS TOUGH ENOUGH TO EAT NAILS! THINK I'LL HEAD FOR TOWN--- AND SEE WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT!
LONESOME TEXAS


RECKON WE CAN STOP OVER AT THAT HOTEL, PARDNER! HOW'D YOU LIKE A STACK OF OATS?
LAST CHANCE
HOTEL
LONESOME
TEXAS
BANK
SALOON
NEIGGHHH!

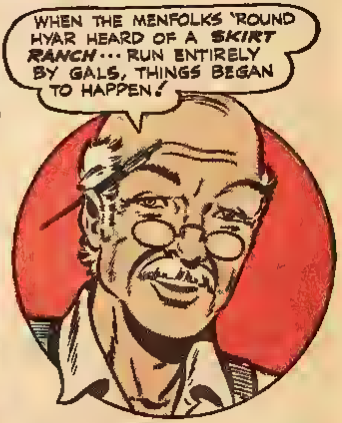

PARDNER IS TAKEN CARE OF, THEN---
MISTER, I WONDER IF YOU COULD TELL ME ABOUT A RANCH UP THE ROAD--- RUN BY A BATCH OF COWGIRLS---
HO! HO! SO YOU GOT RUN OFF SKIRT RANCH TOO, EH, SON? IT HAPPENS ALL THE TIME!


YOU MEAN I'M NOT THE FIRST?
SHUCKS, NO! THOSE GALS MUST RUN A DOZEN MEN OFF EVERY DAY!


BUT HOW COME?
I'LL TELL YUH THE STORY! UP TO ABOUT A YEAR AGO, THAR WARN'T A SINGLE WOMAN IN THIS SECTION 'CEPTING A GREAT GRANDMOTHER AND A COUPLE OF INJUN SQUAWS!


WAS THAT WHY THEY CALLED THE TOWN LONESOME?
SURE WUZ! BUT THEN A TRAVELING SHOW CAME THROUGH, WITH A BATCH OF PURTY GAL DANCERS AND SINGERS! THE SHOW FOLDED WHEN THE MANAGER RAN OFF WITH THE RECEIPTS---
LAST CHANCE
LEHOH
TEXAS
LONESOME
CAFE

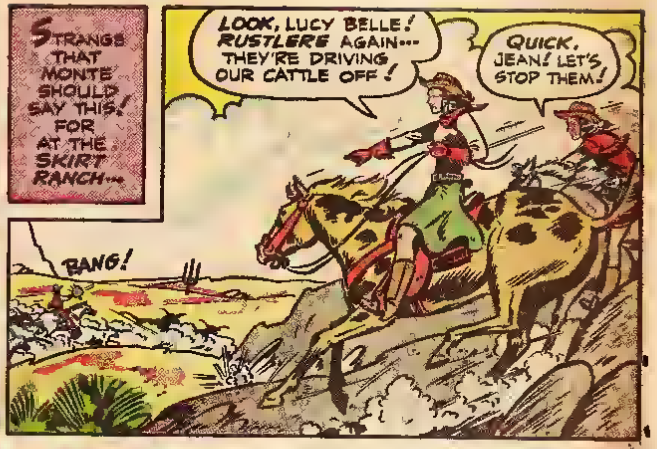

"---AND THEY DECIDED NOT TO GO BACK EAST, BUT TO STICK IT OUT HYAR---!"
GIRLS, WE'VE GOT A LITTLE MONEY LEFT! HOW ABOUT BUYING UP AN OLD RANCH---AND BEING INDEPENDENT?
GOOD IDEA, DONNA! LET'S DO THAT!
IRLS
ERS • SINGERS

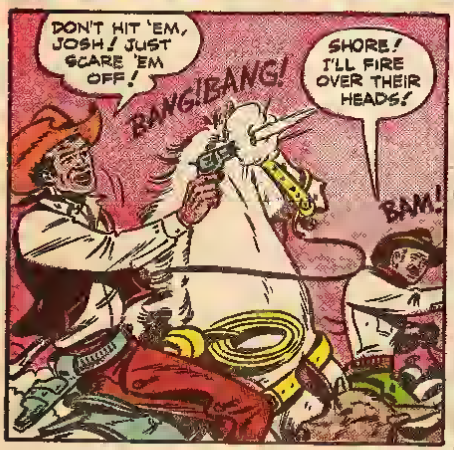

WHEN THE MENFOLKS 'ROUND HYAR HEARD OF A SKIRT RANCH--- RUN ENTIRELY BY GALS, THINGS BEGAN TO HAPPEN!

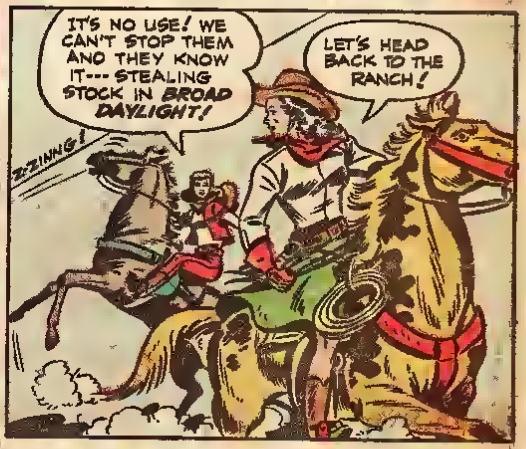

"THE FIRST DAY, A LINEUP FORMED AT THE DOOR---"
QUIT SHOVING!
GIT BEHIND ME IN LINE, CLEM!
QUIET! HERE COME THE GALS!

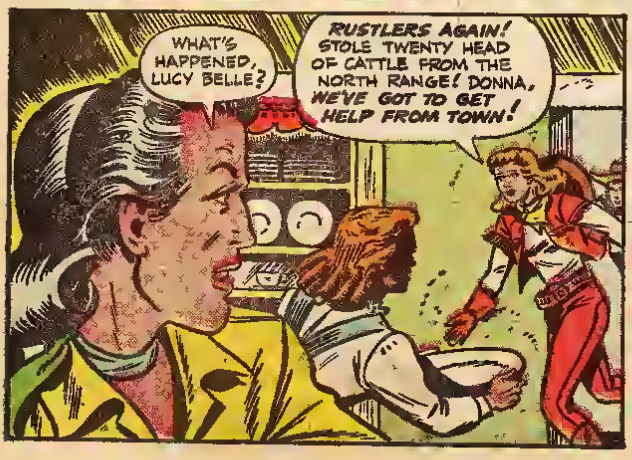

"---UNTIL, FINALLY---"
SEE HERE! YOU MEN ARE UNDERFOOT SO MUCH THAT WE CAN'T GET OUR WORK DONE! WE'RE GOING TO PROVE WE CAN GET ALONG WITHOUT MEN! FROM NOW ON, WE WANT NO MORE MEN VISITORS! THAT GOES FOR ALL OF YOU!
B-BUT..


SINCE THAT DAY, DONNA AND THE OTHER GIRLS HAVEN'T LET A MAN COME NEAR THE RANCH HOUSE!
IT BEATS ALL! I'D LIKE TO SEE WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THEY EVER REALLY GOT IN TROUBLE THOUGH!

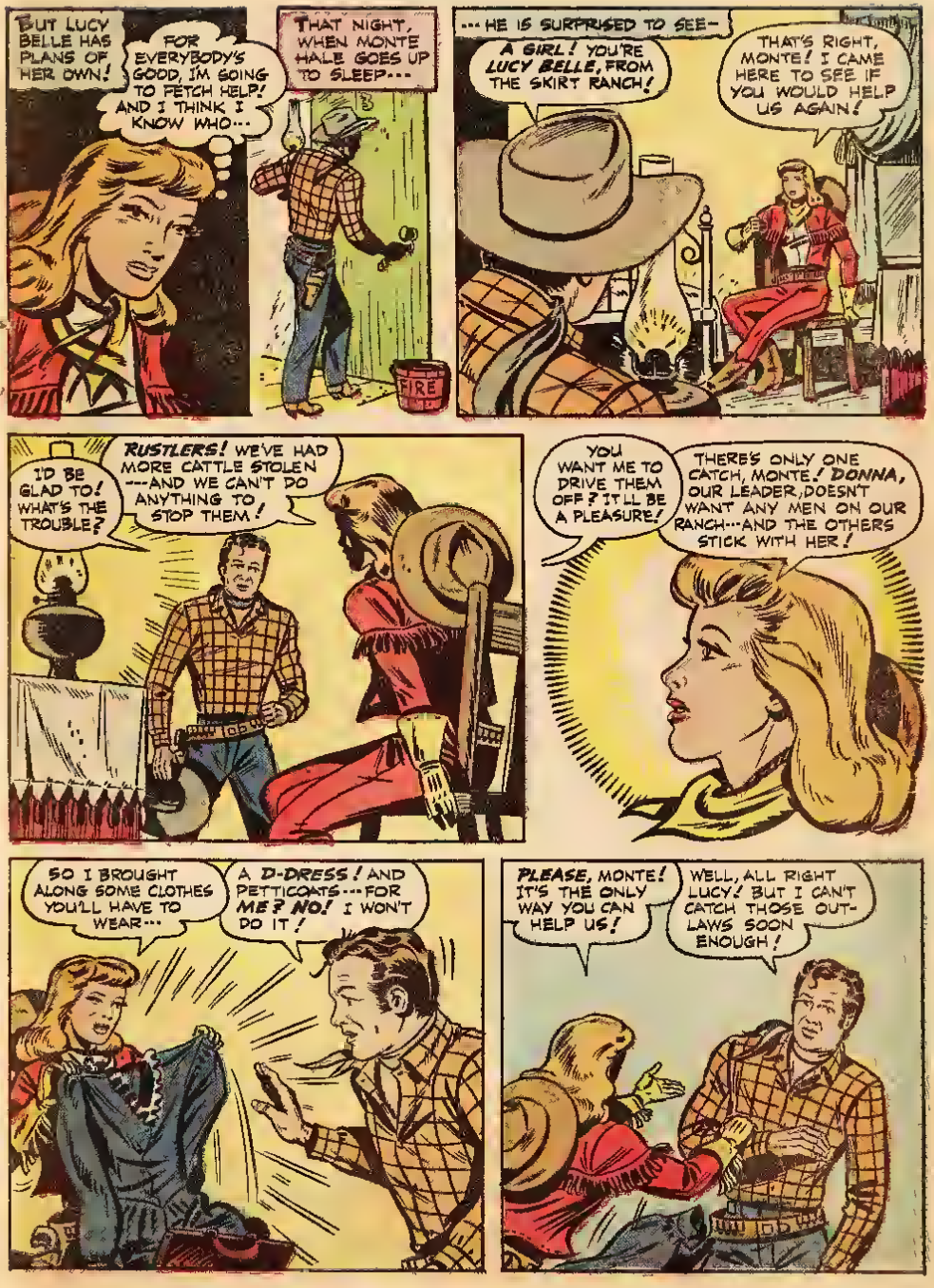

STRANGE THAT MONTE SHOULD SAY THIS! FOR AT THE SKIRT RANCH...
LOOK, LUCY BELLE! RUSTLERS AGAIN... THEY'RE DRIVING OUR CATTLE OFF!
QUICK, JEAN! LET'S STOP THEM!
BANG!


DON'T HIT 'EM, JOSH! JUST SCARE 'EM OFF!
SHORE! I'LL FIRE OVER THEIR HEADS!
BANG!BANG!
BAM!


IT'S NO USE! WE CAN'T STOP THEM AND THEY KNOW IT... STEALING STOCK IN BROAD DAYLIGHT!
LET'S HEAD BACK TO THE RANCH!
ZZZINNG!


WHAT'S HAPPENED, LUCY BELLE?
RUSTLERS AGAIN! STOLE TWENTY HEAD OF CATTLE FROM THE NORTH RANGE! DONNA, WE'VE GOT TO GET HELP FROM TOWN!


YOU MEAN... MEN? NO! WHEN WE STARTED SKIRT RANCH, WE TOOK AN OATH WE'D MAKE A SUCCESS OUT OF IT BY OURSELVES... WITHOUT MEN! WE'LL HAVE TO GET ALONG SOMEHOW!


BUT LUCY BELLE HAS PLANS OF HER OWN!
FOR EVERYBODY'S GOOD, I'M GOING TO FETCH HELP! AND I THINK I KNOW WHO...
THAT NIGHT, WHEN MONTE HALE GOES UP TO SLEEP...
FIRE
...HE IS SURPRISED TO SEE—
A GIRL! YOU'RE LUCY BELLE, FROM THE SKIRT RANCH!
THAT'S RIGHT, MONTE! I CAME HERE TO SEE IF YOU WOULD HELP US AGAIN!
I'D BE GLAD TO! WHAT'S THE TROUBLE?
RUSTLERS! WE'VE HAD MORE CATTLE STOLEN ---AND WE CAN'T DO ANYTHING TO STOP THEM!
YOU WANT ME TO DRIVE THEM OFF? IT'LL BE A PLEASURE!
THERE'S ONLY ONE CATCH, MONTE! DONNA, OUR LEADER, DOESN'T WANT ANY MEN ON OUR RANCH...AND THE OTHERS STICK WITH HER!
SO I BROUGHT ALONG SOME CLOTHES YOU'LL HAVE TO WEAR...
A D-DRESS! AND PETTICOATS...FOR ME? NO! I WON'T DO IT!
PLEASE, MONTE! IT'S THE ONLY WAY YOU CAN HELP US!
WELL, ALL RIGHT LUCY! BUT I CAN'T CATCH THOSE OUT-LAWS SOON ENOUGH!

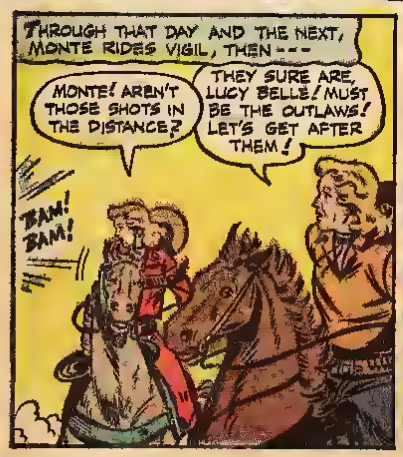

SOON, AT THE SKIRT RANCH—
SOMEONE'S COMING IN...
IT MUST BE LUCY BELLE! SHE WENT OUT A WHILE AGO FOR A RIDE!
THUMP! THUMP!


LUCY! WHO'S YOUR GIRL FRIEND?
GIRLS, I WANT YOU TO MEET MARY HALE! SHE'S COME TO WORK WITH US! HER THROAT'S SORE SO SHE CAN'T TALK MUCH!
H'LO!


GOSH! ISN'T MARY BIG AND STRONG?
SHE'S A REG'LAR AMAZON! WE'LL BE ABLE TO USE HER PATROLING RANGE!

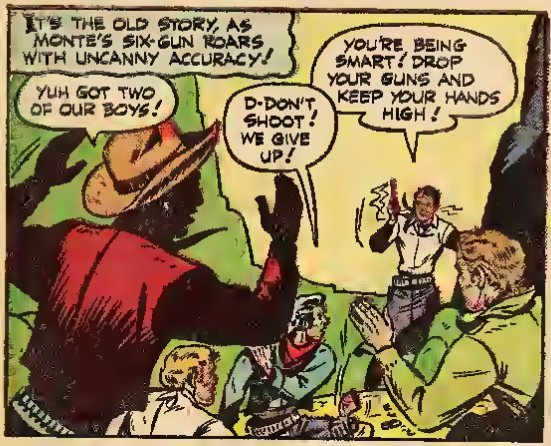

THE NEXT DAY...
IT WORKED PERFECTLY, MONTE! THE GIRLS DIDN'T SUSPECT!
THANKS TO THIS DISGUISE, LUCY! NOW TO GET GOING AND LOCATE THOSE OUTLAWS!


THERE'S JUST ONE WAY THEY CAN DRIVE THE CATTLE TO MARKET WITHOUT GOING PAST LONESOME...AND THAT'S TO TAKE THEM THROUGH CACTUS PASS! LET'S REMEMBER THAT
...AND KEEP PATROLING!


THROUGH THAT DAY AND THE NEXT, MONTE RIDES VIGIL, THEN---
MONTE! AREN'T THOSE SHOTS IN THE DISTANCE?
THEY SURE ARE, LUCY BELLE! MUST BE THE OUTLAWS! LET'S GET AFTER THEM!
BAM! BAM!


BANG! BANG!
THERE THEY ARE! LUCY, YOU HEAD FOR THE RANCH AND WARN THE GIRLS! I'LL CUT THEM OFF AT THE OTHER END OF THE PASS!


AT TOP SPEED, MONTE RACES TO CACTUS PASS!
THEY'VE GOT TO COME THIS WAY WITH THE CATTLE!
WHEN THE RUSTLERS COME UP---
THERE'S SOMEONE BLOCKING THE PASS!
JUST ONE OF THE SKIRT RANCH GALS! SCARE HER OFF!
WATCH HER RUN FER IT!
BAM!
BUT THEY'RE DUE FOR A SURPRISE!
MIND IF I TRY MY LUCK?
BAM!
OWW! KNOCKED THE BLASTED GUN FROM MY HAND!
SPLAT!
TAKE COVER! THAT GAL CAN SHOOT!
BETTER PLUG HER PRONTO!
BANG!
LOOK! A WIG! SHE---I MEAN HE'S A MAN!
ZINNNG!
THANKS! I'M GLAD SOMEONE FINALLY NOTICED!
BAM! BAM!
THIS IS THE SHOWDOWN! CAN MONTE OVERCOME THE STEEP ODDS AGAINST HIM?


IT'S THE OLD STORY, AS MONTE'S SIX-GUN ROARS WITH UNCANNY ACCURACY!
YUH GOT TWO OF OUR BOYS!
D-DON'T SHOOT! WE GIVE UP!
YOU'RE BEING SMART! DROP YOUR GUNS AND KEEP YOUR HANDS HIGH!

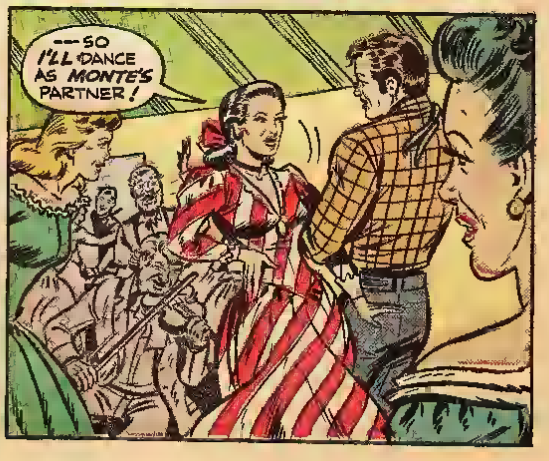

LOOK! LUCY BELLE! YOUR FRIEND MARY HAS CAPTURED THE RUSTLER GANG!
BUT IT'S NOT MARY, DONNA! IT'S MONTE!


SO, A MAN GOT TO HELP US AFTER ALL! MONTE, HOW CAN WE REPAY YOU FOR WHAT YOU'VE DONE?
THAT'S EASY, DONNA!

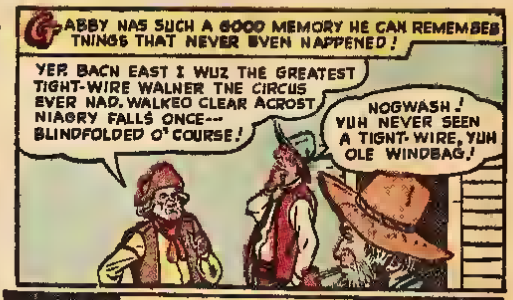

MAKE FRIENDS WITH YOUR NEIGHBORS! YOU'LL FIND IT'S EASIER TO GET ALONG! AND I SUGGEST YOU START BY HAVING A BIG SQUARE DANCE--- WITH EVERY MAN IN LONESOME INVITED!
IT'S A DEAL---FOR THIS SATURDAY NIGHT!

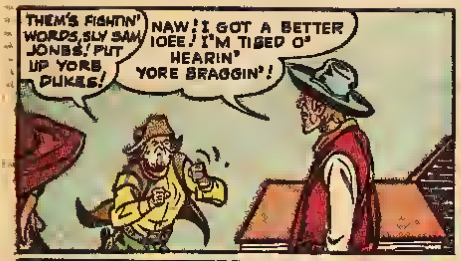

SATURDAY NIGHT ROLLS AROUND!
MONTE, YOU PROMISED THIS DANCE TO ME!
NO, TO ME!
GOSH, I DON'T KNOW WHO I PROM---

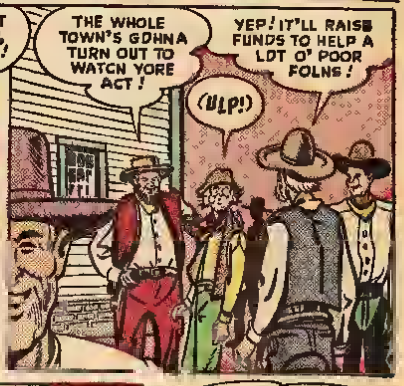

GIRLS, STOP ACTING LIKE BABIES! REMEMBER, I'M STILL THE LEADER HERE---
DONNA!


---SO I'LL DANCE AS MONTE'S PARTNER!

GABBY HAYES IN TIGHT ROPE TO DOOM








NEXT DAY, A GREAT CROWD HAS GATHERED IN RAWHIDE TO WATCH GABBY...
WHEN I FALL OFF, THIS UMBRELLY MAY FLOAT ME TO EARTH!
(GULP!) THAT'S A POWERFUL DROP!
THERE NE IS! WHAT A MAN! GET GOIN', GABBY!
C'MON, GABBY! QUIT STALLIN'!
DIG DOWN, FOLKS! DON'T FORGET IT'S ALL FOR CHARITY!
THE SLY SAM JONES CHARITY, THAT IS!
PERFECT! I GOT ALL THE CHARITY DOUGH, AND WHILE EVERYBODY IN TOWN IS HERE I CAN ROB THE SAFE IN THAT BUILDING OVER THAR!
SOON....
QUIET, IDJITS! I'M A-COMIN'!
BOOOOO! BOOO! WE WANT ACTION!
HEY! THE DINGBUSTED ROPE BENDS!
SWISH
HALP---SAY, WHAT IN TARNATION'S GOIN' ON?
FROM HIS LOFTY PERCH, GABBY SPIES SLY SAM JONES AT WORK.....


THE ORNERY COYOTE! THINKS HE'S SAFE WITH ME ABOUT TO BUST MY NECK!

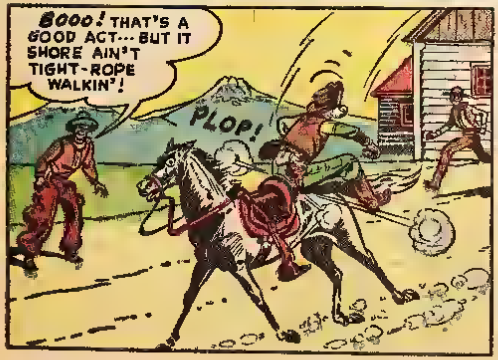

I'LL FOOL HIM! I'LL FLOAT TO EARTH WITH MY UMBRELLY!

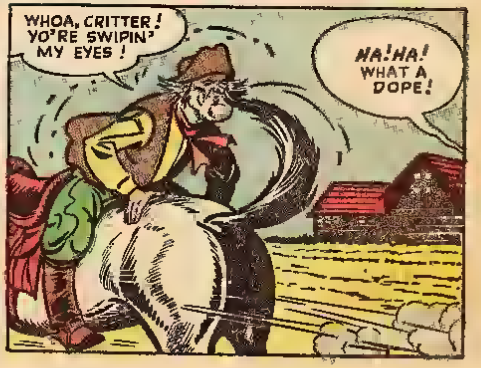

GABBY THINKS HE'S OPENING AN UMBRELLA! INSTEAD HE FIRES HIE MIGHTY GUN, AND THE RECOIL SPINS HIM LIKE A PINWHEEL!
BOOM!
SWOOSH


HAW! HAW! LOOKS AS IF SOMEONE HUNG HIM OUT TO DRY!
THAT'S 'CAUSE HE'S STILL WET BEHIND THE EARS! HAW! HAW!


BOOM!
IT'S HOOMILIATIN'! FOLKS LAUGH AT ME, WHILE SLY SAM IS MAKING A GETAWAY!


I'LL GET THAT POLECAT!
STOP SHOOTIN', YUH FOOL! MADE MY HOSS BOLT!
BOOM!


BOOO! THAT'S A GOOD ACT--- BUT IT SHORE AIN'T TIGHT-ROPE WALKIN'!
PLOP!


WHOA, CRITTER! YO'RE SWIPIN' MY EYES!
HA! HA! WHAT A DOPE!

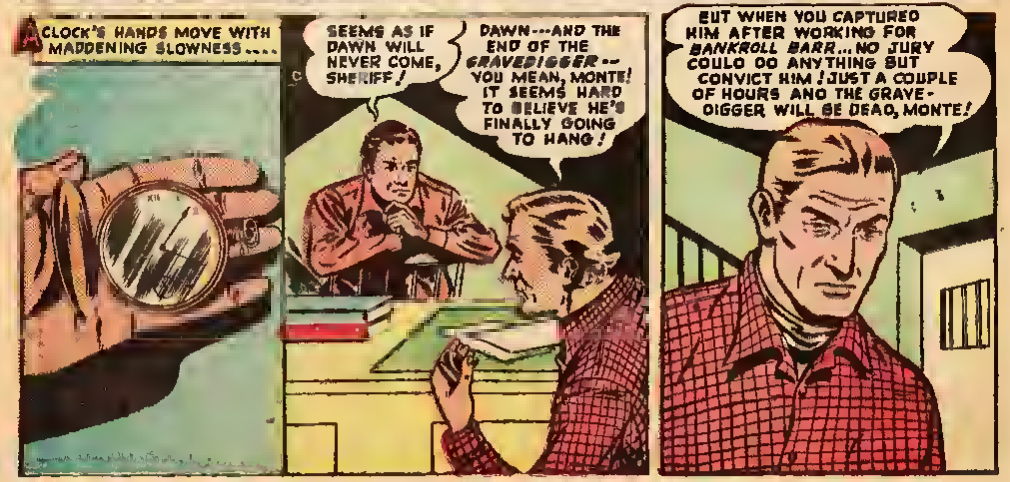

SLY SAM HALTS OUTSIDE OF TOWN WHEN HE SEES HIS LONE PURSUER....
WHOA THERE, HOSS!--AN' LIFT YORE HANDS, GABBY!
GIT OFF! I'M GONNA SHOOT YUN!
HA! HE DON'T KNOW HOW FAST I AM ON THE DRAW!
THIS TIME GABBY GOES FOR HIS GUN---AND WHIPS OUT HIS UMBRELLA!
REACH FOR THE SKY, YUH OINGBUSTED, GOGGLE-EYED, YELLER-STREAKED COYOTE!
HUH!?
HAW! HAW! IT'S RIDICKERLOUS!
LAUGH, EH? I'LL SHOOT YORE HAT OFF!
HAHAHA!
I'LL BE HORNSWOGGLED!
CONSARNED UMBRELLY AIN'T WORTH NOTHIN'!
OUCH!
HEE HEE! GOT THE DROP AFTER ALL!
ULP!
SOON....
RECKON THIS IS BETTER THAN TIGHT-ROPE WALKIN', GABBY! YO'RE A PLUMB HERO!
RECKON SO, SLIM, RECKON SO!

MONTE HALE in The GRAVEDIGGER'S ESCAPE!

Long had the grim black figure of the GRAVEDIGGER ridden rough-shod over the forces of law and justice! At last--sentenced to death--the ruthless killer waited for the dawn that would see him hang! But as he waited, the GRAVEDIGGER'S cunning mind searched desperately for a means to escape....

THE GRAVEDIGGER--HIDING IN A COFFIN!

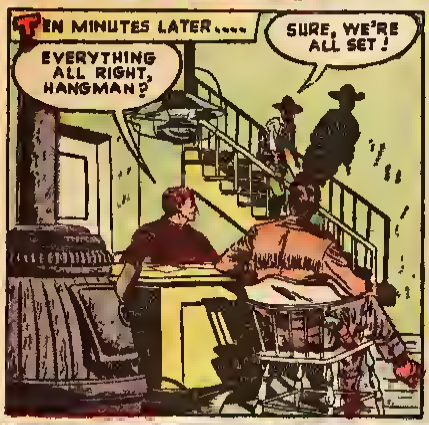
RIGHT! BUT I'M GETTING OUT OF IT...AND YOU'RE GETTING IN, HALE--- TO STAY!

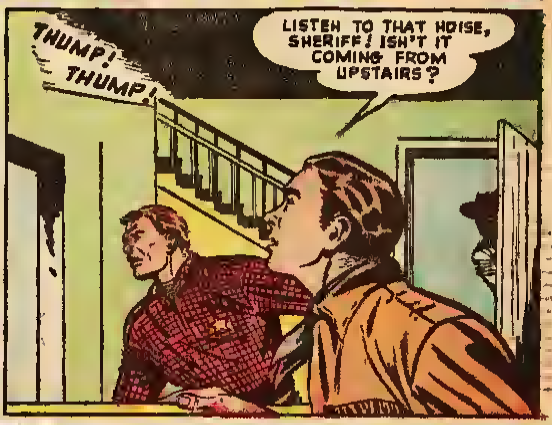



WHO'S THAR ?
IT'S ME, SHERIFF! PARKER ...THE HANGMAN!

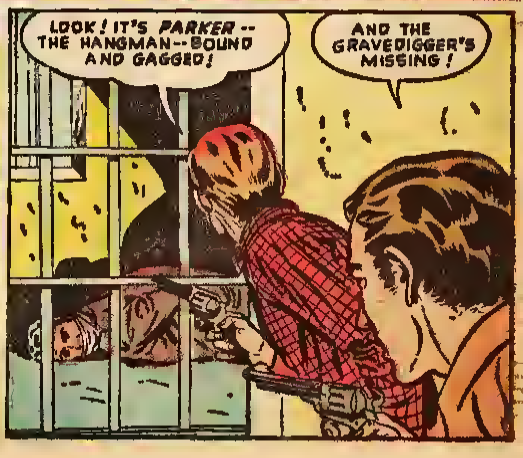

I WANT TO GO UP AND TAKE A LOOK AT THE PRISONER--MAKE SURE MY GALLOWS AND LOOP ARE ADJUSTED FOR HIM!
GO AHEAD ---BUT BE CAREFUL!


THAT BLAMED GRAVEDIGGER ESCAPED SO MANY TIMES WE CAIN'T LET IT HAPPEN AGIN, MONTE!
AMEN TO THAT, SHERIFF!


TEN MINUTES LATER....
EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT, HANGMAN?
SURE, WE'RE ALL SET!


THUMP! THUMP!
LISTEN TO THAT NOISE, SHERIFF! ISN'T IT COMING FROM UPSTAIRS?

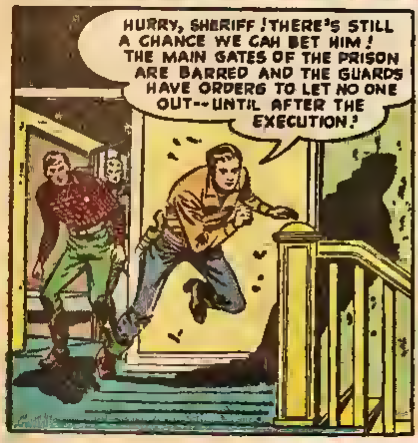

FROM THE GRAVEDIGGER'S CELL, UNLESS I'M WRONG!
HURRY! LET'S SEE WHAT'S HAPPENED!

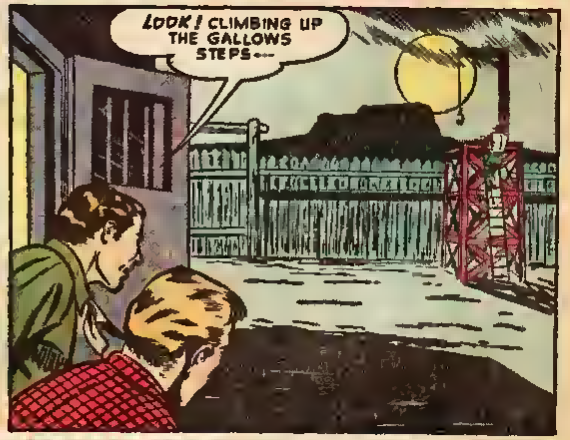

LOOK! IT'S PARKER -- THE HANGMAN--BOUND AND GAGGED!
AND THE GRAVEDIGGER'S MISSING!


QUICK, MONTE! GIT THE GAS OFF!
THAT DOES IT!

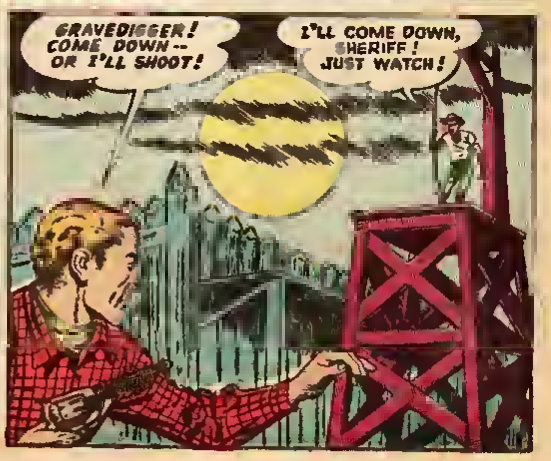

PARKER, WHAT HAPPENED?
THE GRAVEDIGGER GRABBED ME THROUGH THE BARS AND CHOKED ME! HE GOT MY KEYS AND UNLOCKED THE DOOR! THEN HE TOOK MY CLOTHES AND BOUND AND GAGGED ME!

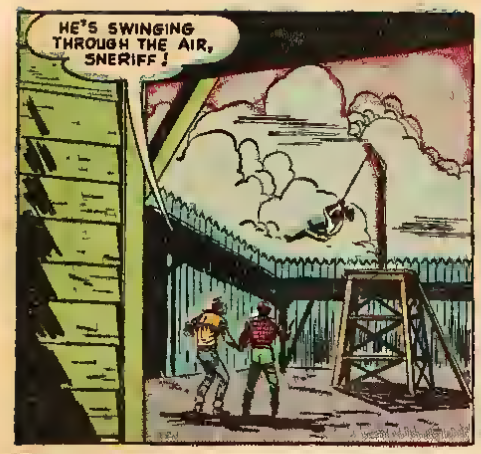

TOOK YORE CLOTHES! THEN IT WUZ THE GRAVEDIGGER THAT JUST WENT DOWN THE STAIRS!


HURRY, SHERIFF! THERE'S STILL A CHANCE WE CAN BET HIM! THE MAIN GATES OF THE PRISON ARE BARRED AND THE GUARDS HAVE ORDERS TO LET NO ONE OUT--UNTIL AFTER THE EXECUTION!

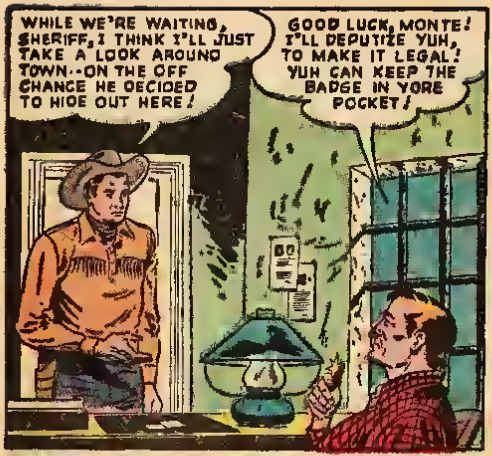

LOOK! CLIMBING UP THE GALLOWS STEPS---

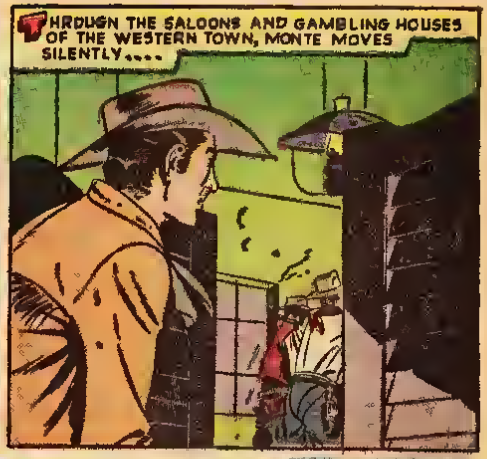

THEY'VE FOUND ME! BUT ANOTHER MINUTE AND IT'LL BE TOO LATE!
IT'S THE GRAVEDIGGER!

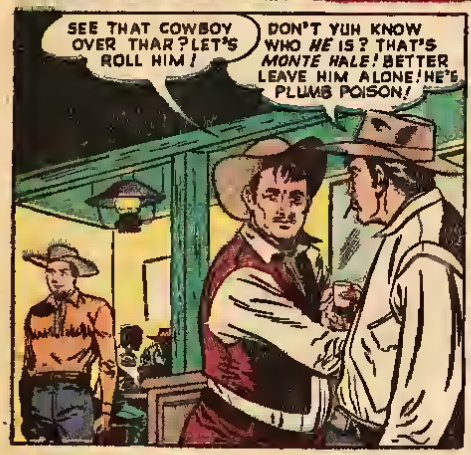

GRAVEDIGGER! COME DOWN-- OR I'LL SHOOT!
I'LL COME DOWN, SHERIFF! JUST WATCH!

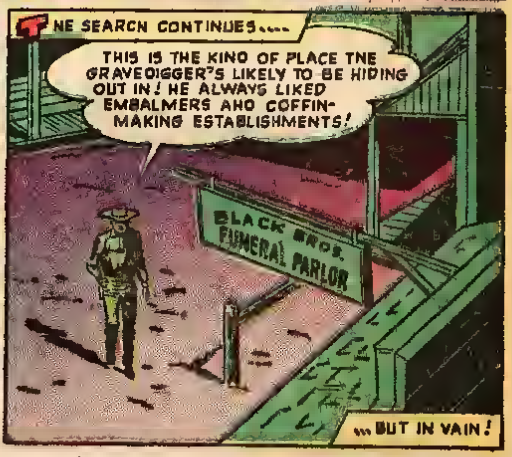


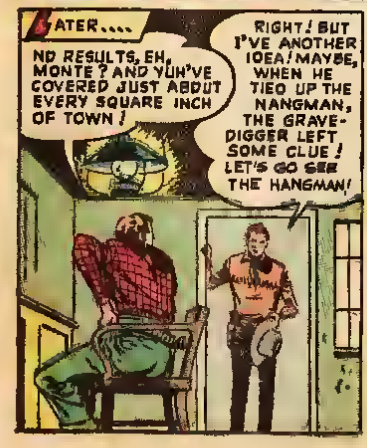
Again the cunning killer has made his escape good -- on the very eve of his hanging! What will the lawmen do?

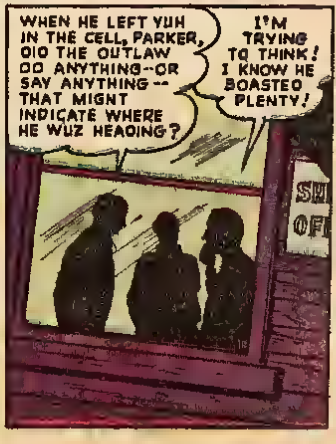

WHILE WE'RE WAITING, SHERIFF, I THINK I'LL JUST TAKE A LOOK AROUND TOWN--ON THE OFF CHANCE HE DECIDED TO HIDE OUT HERE!
GOOD LUCK, MONTE! I'LL DEPUTIZE YUH, TO MAKE IT LEGAL! YUH CAN KEEP THE BADGE IN YORE POCKET!


THROUGH THE SALOONS AND GAMBLING HOUSES OF THE WESTERN TOWN, MONTE MOVES SILENTLY....

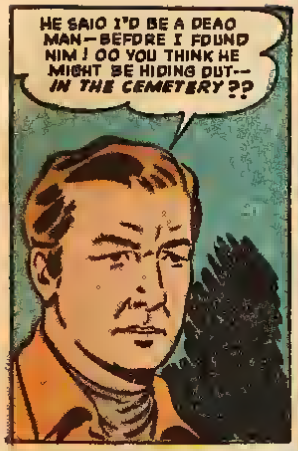

SEE THAT COWBOY OVER THAR? LET'S ROLL HIM!
DON'T YUH KNOW WHO *HE* IS? THAT'S *MONTE HALE*! BETTER LEAVE HIM ALONE! HE'S PLUMB POISON!

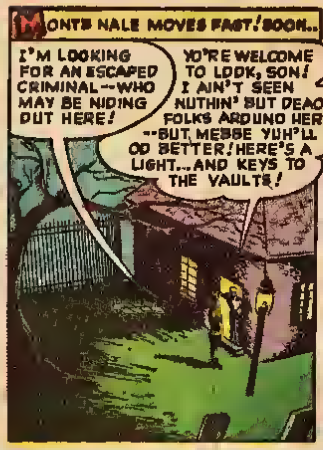

THE SEARCH CONTINUES....
THIS IS THE KIND OF PLACE THE GRAVEDIGGER'S LIKELY TO BE HIDING OUT IN! HE ALWAYS LIKED EMBALMERS AND COFFIN-MAKING ESTABLISHMENTS!
BLACK BROS. FUNERAL PARLOR
...BUT IN VAIN!

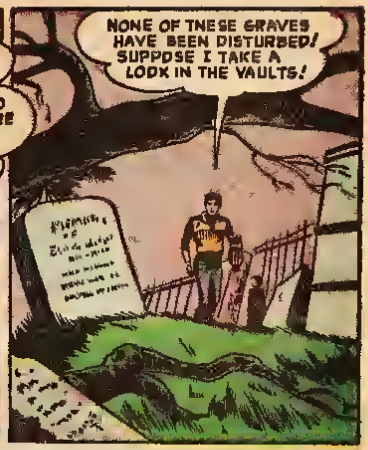

LATER....
NO RESULTS, EH, MONTE? AND YUH'VE COVERED JUST ABOUT EVERY SQUARE INCH OF TOWN!
RIGHT! BUT I'VE ANOTHER IDEA! MAYBE, WHEN HE TIED UP THE HANGMAN, THE GRAVE-DIGGER LEFT SOME CLUE! LET'S GO SEE THE HANGMAN!

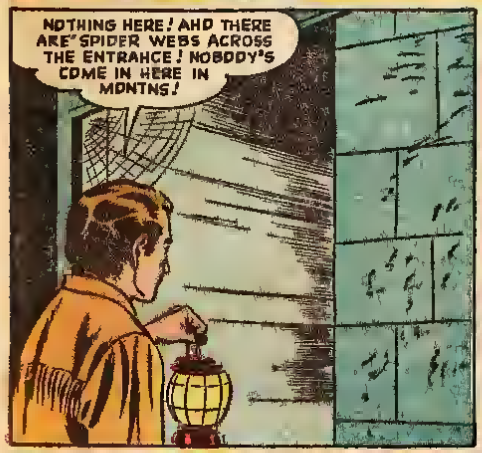

WHEN HE LEFT YUH IN THE CELL, PARKER, DID THE OUTLAW DO ANYTHING--OR SAY ANYTHING -- THAT MIGHT INDICATE WHERE HE WUZ HEADING?
I'M TRYING TO THINK! I KNOW HE BOASTED PLENTY!


IN FACT HE SAID -- "*MONTE HALE WILL BE A DEAD MAN AFORE HE CATCHES ME!*"
A DEAD MAN! SHERIFF, I'VE GOT AN IDEA!


HE SAID I'D BE A DEAD MAN—BEFORE I FOUND HIM! DO YOU THINK HE MIGHT BE HIDING OUT-- IN THE CEMETERY??

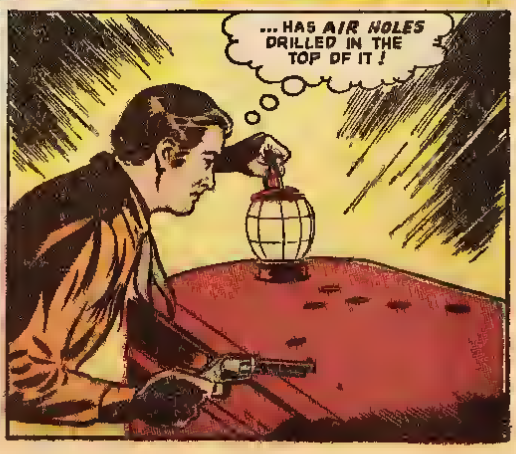

MONTE HALE MOVES FAST! BOOM..
I'M LOOKING FOR AN ESCAPED CRIMINAL--WHO MAY BE HIDING OUT HERE!
YO'RE WELCOME TO LOOK, SON! I AIN'T SEEN NUTHIN' BUT DEAD FOLKS AROUND HERE --BUT, MEBBE YUH'LL DO BETTER! HERE'S A LIGHT... AND KEYS TO THE VAULTS!

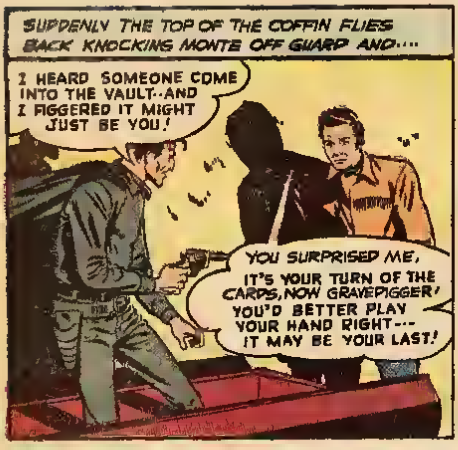

NONE OF THESE GRAVES HAVE BEEN DISTURBED! SUPPOSE I TAKE A LOOK IN THE VAULTS!


NOTHING HERE! AND THERE ARE SPIDER WEBS ACROSS THE ENTRANCE! NOBODY'S COME IN HERE IN MONTHS!


THIS IS THE LAST VAULT! MAYBE MY HUNCH WAS JUST A PIPE-DREAM!


MONTE MAKES AN INTERESTING DISCOVERY!
NO SPIDER WEBS ON THE DOOR! AND THAT COFFIN IN THE VAULT...


...HAS AIR HOLES DRILLED IN THE TOP OF IT!

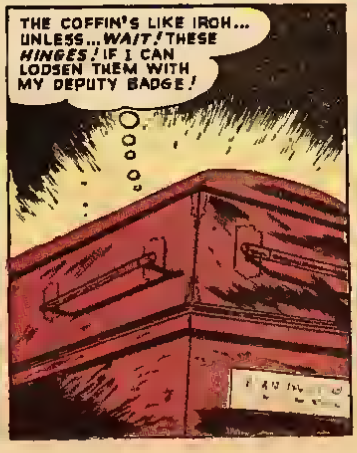

SUDDENLY THE TOP OF THE COFFIN FLIES BACK KNOCKING MONTE OFF GUARD AND....
I HEARD SOMEONE COME INTO THE VAULT--AND I FIGGERED IT MIGHT JUST BE YOU!
YOU SURPRISED ME, IT'S YOUR TURN OF THE CARDS, NOW GRAVEDIGGER! YOU'D BETTER PLAY YOUR HAND RIGHT--- IT MAY BE YOUR LAST!


IN A MOMENT.....
I'LL JUST REPEAT A STUNT THAT WORKED IN THE PRISON, HALE! I HAD THIS BLACK OUTFIT HIDDEN HERE, JUST IN CASE! YO'RE GOING TO WEAR IT... AND I'M GOING OUT WEARING YOURN!
IT WON'T WORK, GRAVEDIGGER!

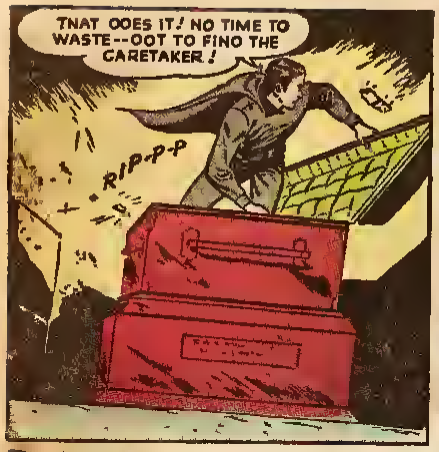

YES IT WILL! 'CAUSE YO'RE GOING TO BE LOCKED IN THE COFFIN--- PERMANENTLY!

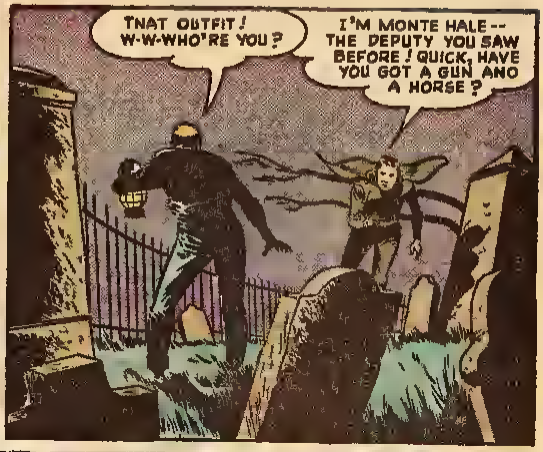

BY THE TIME THEY DISCOVER YUH, YUH'LL BE JUST A SKELETON-- WITH MY CLOTHES ON! AND NOW-- SO-LONG, LAWMAN!
CLICK


IF I CAN... ONLY... PUSH THIS UP! NO... IT'S NO USE!

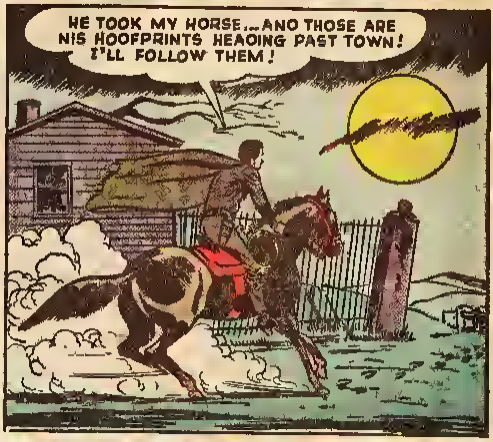

THE COFFIN'S LIKE IROH... UNLESS... WAIT! THESE HINGES! IF I CAN LOOSEN THEM WITH MY DEPUTY BADGE!


THERE! THEY'RE GETTING LOOSE!


THAT DOES IT! NO TIME TO WASTE--GOT TO FIND THE CARETAKER!
RIP-P-P


THAT OUTFIT! W-W-WHO'RE YOU?
I'M MONTE HALE -- THE DEPUTY YOU SAW BEFORE! QUICK, HAVE YOU GOT A GUN AND A HORSE?

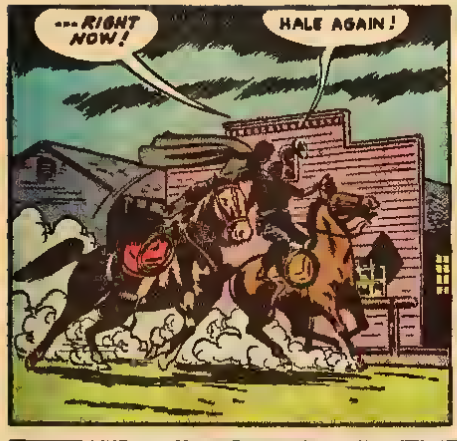

YES, BUT---
I'M BORROWING THEM--ON OFFICIAL BUSINESS! THE GRAVEDIGGER IS ON THE LOOSE AND HE MUST BE CAUGHT!

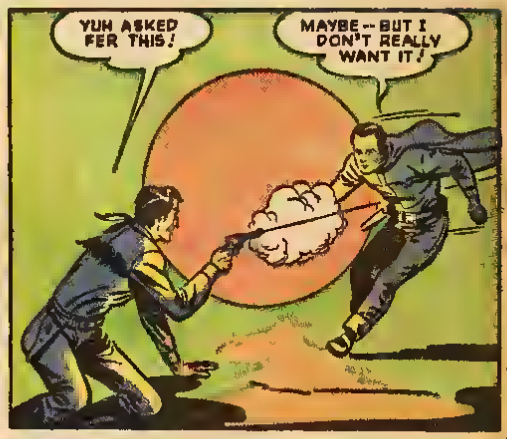

HE TOOK MY HORSE...AND THOSE ARE HIS HOOFPRINTS HEADING PAST TOWN! I'LL FOLLOW THEM!

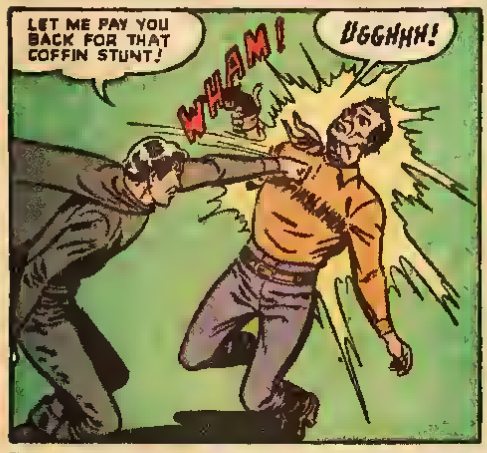

HE'S GOING DOWN MAIN STREET! RECKON HE FIGURED HE'D BE SAFE IN MY OUTFIT!

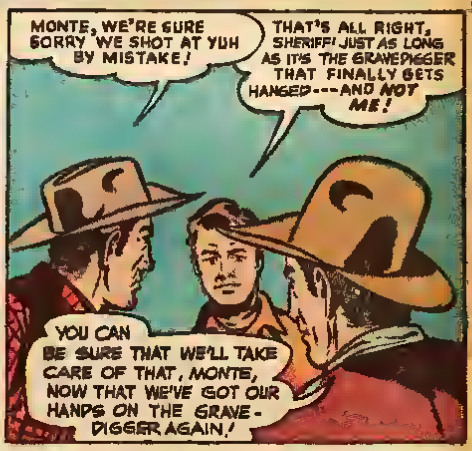

HE IS SAFE! BUT I'M NOT! THE TOWNSPEOPLE THINK I'M THE GRAVEDIGGER!
THE GRAVEDIGGER! SHOOT HIM! KILL HIM!
BANG


ONLY ONE THING TO DO, AND THAT'S TO END THIS ---









Monte Hale Western #38 (1949)

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